

THE
MORAL
IMBELLIES

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410 PACIFIC AVENUE
LONG BEACH, CALIF.

John Greenleaf
Wells 1891

THE MORAL IMBECILES

By SARAH P. McL. GREENE

Author of "Vesty of the Basins"



NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1898

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NEW YORK AND LONDON:

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THE MORAL IMBECILES

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THE MORAL IMBECILES

CHAPTER I

“DARLING!”

No one had ever called me “darling” before. I turned, wonderingly.

“I do not know how to answer a single question,” she whispered. Her face bore the intellectual stamp of generations, so thoughtful as even to be tinged with melancholy. She smiled at me.

“We are put upon our honor,” I whispered back. “I am breaking a rule in holding any communication with you.” And I solved the last difficult problem upon my own paper.

“Dear, is not it better to be sweet and kind than to be a crank about one’s own honor?”

She was vigorously well grown, there was the unmistakable aroma of wealth about her, and she was expressly beautiful; neverthe-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

less, I experienced in that moment an actual physical sense as of a sad little child tugging at my poor old black gown.

Avoiding the eyes of our mentors on the platform, I drew her tasks to me. Under the same acutely compelling sense I even divined what her handwriting was like and copied it. Before our papers were gathered hers were in her hands, complete.

Our fate was read to us the next day.

"There are two candidates for admission to this institution," said the woman president, smiling, "whom we must particularly congratulate upon the satisfactory character of their papers—Miss Martha Scheffer" (my forlorn self) "and Miss Katherine Eleanor Arundell" (the baby who had tugged at my rusty gown).

A bevy of young women, endeared to her by an acquaintance of some hours, were clinging about the person of Miss Arundell. "How *did* you do it, love? You were sure you could never pass the examinations."

"Oh, I do not know"—the sweet melancholy of her face broke into an inspiring smile—"somehow it all came to me—in a flash!"

CHAPTER II

"I COULD not tell of you, you see," said she, in my room. "I wanted to—you angel!—but it would have gotten you into such trouble. So I stood true, and always shall!"

There was almost a sublime glow on her features.

"What are you here for?" I said, shortly. "There are fashionable seminaries for such as you. Why did your parents send you here?"

"They are dead, dear," she gasped, and made crosses with her forefinger on the lap of my gown. "Grandmamma takes care of me, and I do not think she loves me very much. She said once that I was a 'moral imbecile'!"

The injustice of this remark blazed warmly from her eyes. I was silent.

"I have really only Forrester. Forrester is my brother." She turned pale and choked; the crosses became very rapid and frequent.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“I have never told any one but you—but Forrester went wrong. He forged grandmamma’s name to a check; but grandmamma has so much—and was so stingy with him. I do not see how he could do any other way.”

Her pale and rapid movements changed to an air of conscientious resolution.

“Grandmamma told him never to enter the house again till—till he had been redeemed, if you know what that means. He went to California. One night he came back; only I and Watson—the butler—saw him. Dearest, I do not think he looked redeemed—he was all pinned up with safety-pins!”

An oblivious compassion shone in her eyes as she lifted them to mine.

I looked away from her over into the glass opposite. I saw a wide mouth, unfeelingly sarcastic at this moment; a dark, ugly face; a long scar on one cheek, and a permanent frown between the eyes. “And does your grandmother call him a moral imbecile too?” I queried.

“I dare say—she is unkind enough.” The finger began making crosses again on my gown. “I and Watson gave him

THE MORAL IMBECILES

some money. *We* love him. He came here—he was expelled from college once in this place and knew some people. Grandmamma does not know where he is. I want to be near him, so I told her if she would let me come here to school, I would promise to marry horrid old Beeman Price. Grandmamma thinks there can never be money enough in the family, and he has oceans. But I can get out of that all right, once I have my way. All I care—do not you think I can help redeem poor Forrester?"

"How old are you?" said I, abruptly, astray of the subject. The face over in the glass looked bitter and stern.

"Twenty, and Forrester is twenty-two."

"You look seventeen, and you act like—"

Her face grew pitifully crimson.

"Why should you tell all this to me," I continued—"an absolute stranger to you? Is it very discreet? Why should you trust me?"

"Because I do."

Her head went down on my lap, already inscribed with innumerable crosses. I felt the sobs that were shaking her.

"I do not know what to do with you," I

THE MORAL IMBECILES

said. "You have come in here against the rules, in study hours, and I am very busy."

She crept nearer, her arms went round my neck.

"Have you learned your lessons?" The head made a negative movement in my neck.

"Bring your books; I will help you."

The face over in the glass showed very grim when she was gone. Hardship, poverty, toil, from my childhood up—the last stage, three years, employed as nurse amid the miseries and horrors of a county insane asylum. Now, at twenty-four, I had earned enough, and by lonely application had mastered enough, to take for myself the papers admitting me to the last year at X—, preparatory to entering the medical school near by, the ambition of my life.

But all along my life thus far there had been ever some helpless hand lifted by the way, hindering, deterring, holding me. My fate? Or was I, in spite of my ugly face, foolish and soft-hearted?

I laid my own work aside preparatory to aiding Miss Katherine Eleanor Arundell in

THE MORAL IMBECILES

her tasks ; but when she came back there were no books in her hand, and her usually self-possessed and deliberate manner was changed to a rush of excitement.

CHAPTER III

"FORRESTER has come to call! He wishes to see you! Parmenter" (our respected president) "has given me permission to take you down!"

"But I am not going down to see your brother," said I, coolly, taking up my book. "It is absurd."

She closed the door behind her and stepped across the room as if it had suddenly become a place of awful solemnity, her face white with emotion.

"*You* belong to a church, do you not?"

"Assuredly."

"And how will you feel — how will you feel in that great day they tell about, to have it said that poor Forrester asked to see you, and you would not go down — no, not for one single little moment — to help me redeem him?"

My life had not been of a humorous character, but the quality was in me, and I bit my lip.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Little one,” I said to the physically tall and well-developed being before me, “go down and see your brother, and leave me alone. I have played with you already enough for to-day.”

I had not meant to deal her a blow, but I had done so and I was amazed; there was no affectation in the still despair with which she turned to the window, like some bright thing wounded beyond recall.

I rose. “Come!” I said.

Evidently the mendicant era of safety-pins had been erased from Forrester Arundell’s calendar. “Fop!” I said, mentally.

“This is so kind of you, Miss Scheffer,” he said, bowing low—“so very kind of you. My sister is already so deeply attached to you, I hope you will let me call you a friend too.”

“Come,” said Miss Arundell, now quite joyful in spirits again, “let us all sit down, and tell her about the old place and Graff and Dinah. Dinah was my horse and Graff was Forrester’s.”

“Ah, what a stick he was! And I thought him so tremendous.”

“And poor grandpapa has lost his mind,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

you know," said Miss Arundell, appealing directly to me.

"Ah yes, my poor grandfather had lost his mind years before I left home, Miss Scheffer," said Forrester.

They sat, one on each side of me, at a conventional distance, but as the sister now moved her chair a little nearer me the large brother immediately followed her example.

"Still, Dinah did a very pretty gait that day at the country fair—when we ran away to it, Forrester, you remember?"

"Yes, you won, Nell, although you were not entered. How I tagged after you in mischief!"

"Well, you poor boy, you could never think of things to do yourself, you know."

They both came nearer.

"Grandmamma is just the same as ever."

"Yes, I should think my grandmother would be likely to be just about the same as ever, Nell."

"Oh, but, Forrester, the Kentucky horse I had last summer was—a dream!"

"I am training a horse that would be a jewel for you, Nell—if he were mine to give you."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

They were both almost affectionately close to me now.

"And what used you to ride, Miss Schef-fer? Tell us about it."

"I lived," said I, without embarrassment—as those who have struggled with penury and pain are not apt to have—"on a wretched little farm in Vermont; we had one very old and uncouth horse. I was sometimes sent to mill on his back to bring home a bag of meal. I had no saddle, and I need not tell you the experience was entirely bracing."

"But I bet you stayed on," said Forrester, earnestly, looking straight into my eyes.

"Well, yes—I stayed on."

"How charming of you to do such wild things," said Miss Arundell, "and not to mind what people said." Her handsome face had a sort of chastened saintship in repose. The brother had no feature like her, but he looked at me with the faithful-est and kindest pair of blue eyes I have ever seen in all this world. How was one to know moral imbeciles by their looks, then?

"It was not a fad, nor even a dashing freak of mine," I returned. "It was a mat-ter of necessity; we all worked very hard."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"You darling!" said Miss Arundell. The brother sighed between his brutally strong and perfect teeth. I did not know but they were both going to put their arms around me, but they restrained the momentary impulse.

"And now I hope you will have a very happy time together," I said, rising. "I am going to leave you."

"Oh no!" Miss Arundell gasped, laying a detaining hand on me. Forrester did not do that, but he looked grave encouragement at her. "We have not come to the subject yet—have we, Forrester?"

"No, Nell, we have not come to the subject yet."

I sat down again and waited.

"You see"—she began tracing crosses again on the skirt of my gown—"we are going to do what you think right. Forrester has been making his money—well, betting about horses, and—well, cards; and he never cheats—but perhaps you think it is not right?"

"Yes; I think it is weak and wrong."

I looked straightly aside from him to the questioning gaze of his sister.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Well, having promised to do what she wished, I squeeze pocket-money out of grand-mamma—enough for us both—and I wish him to share it with me instead of doing those things, and he laughs at me; he says it is unmanly; he says he won't!"

"I think it is unmanly, too."

"There!" Forrester chuckled, and in his elation drew out a perfumed handkerchief from his pocket, a half-dozen pairs of kid gloves, more or less worn, falling unnoticed beside him on the floor.

Miss Arundell's face was a picture of dismay and perplexity.

"I do not know what to do!" she cried.

I had never been in society, and had walked of necessity a hard, straight line.

"I do not feel competent to be the adviser of you two," I said, "but you have appealed to me, and I will tell you frankly the best I think. I think it is beneath your brother either to gamble or to take your pocket-money. I think if he would get any honest employment, however degrading he might consider it in one sense, I, at least, according to the best I think and know, should honor him for it!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Blank dismay showed on the faces of both the moral imbeciles.

"And now I am going," I said. I held out my hand to Forrester Arundell, looking at him for the first time since I had thus mercilessly suggested his line of conduct.

He grasped my hand warmly and without anger, meeting me in his peculiarly earnest, straightforward way, but he looked, as his sister had done, as though I had dealt him an irremediable blow.

CHAPTER IV

"CAN you account for your friend — for Miss Arundell?" said the president, who had bidden me to her in private. "She passed—not taking papers in advance, like yourself—but she passed wonderfully good examinations for admission—and I am informed by her teachers that during the nine days she has already been here she has not yet been able to answer a single question put to her in the class-room."

I looked straight and sadly at Madam Parmenter.

As far as my own undoing was concerned, I can honestly say I would have preferred to tell the truth then and there; as it was, I could only meet her gaze sadly and unblushingly.

"We thought possibly some mental strain in preparing herself to come here may have temporarily unfitted her, Miss Scheffer?"

Still I could not even smile. "I hope you

THE MORAL IMBECILES

will have all the patience possible with her," I said.

"She is a most engaging person, and so endearingly tractable. If she can make some improvement, very well; if not, it will doubtless be best for her to repair to her home again until she can recover her mental tone."

"Eleanor," I said, later, to the subject of this conversation, "if you do not learn your lessons—"

"Oh, darling, I have such news for you! Forrester has got a place—as conductor—on the street cars!"

In tragedy Miss Arundell was supreme, and solemnly tragic was her countenance now.

"I am very glad of it," I said, briefly, hiding my amazement. "Surely, if he has resolved to do so nobly, you do not wish to be sent home because—"

"Yes," said she, very seriously, "I wish to go home. October is my favorite month in the country, and the sublimest to ride in. Poor grandpapa misses me, too, I know—and I shall leave Forrester with you."

"With me!"

"Yes; he is doing what you advised, and

THE MORAL IMBECILES

we think, somehow, that you see the right way for him to get redeemed and for grand-mamma to take him back. He says he shall keep right on, if you will let him call sometimes and ‘get points.’ It will not be often, poor fellow! he rarely has any time off. And I shall have you with me in your winter vacation, when we are in New York.”

“What a preposterous idea, Eleanor! Unless you will decide to stay here and apply yourself, it will be ‘farewell’ between us two.”

“Ah no!” She smiled, confidently.

“In my winter vacation, I shall be at our Vermont shanty, with my good brother Dan —very surely.”

“Then I will come there to you.”

“Excuse me—but you will do no such thing! We could neither entertain you nor keep you warm.”

“Well, it will be better for me to go to you in the summer, I think, and in your winter vacation you will come to me.”

“Most certainly not.”

“Oh yes, you will!” She laughed with such enlightenment in the belief that she did not even care to pursue the subject.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Why won't you stay here and learn something?" I said.

An idea that Miss Arundell would fain have considerately and delicately concealed from me now forced itself upon me—that she considered it ill-bred to study. The softest compassion only lighted her face. "You cannot help it," she sighed, mysteriously, "but perhaps some day things will be different. You do not know," she added, "the trial it was to me to come here at all; but I felt it my duty, and I came."

Her saintship was clad all in white, and it became her.

"You won't be sharp with poor Forrester? He might not understand you so well as I."

"Indeed, if you could look into my heart, Eleanor, you might see that I feel rather sharp with *you*."

She laughed and laid the cool rose of her face against my scarred, dark cheek.

CHAPTER V

“FARE, please!”

It was a Sunday evening, unseasonably warm, and I had not noticed the conductor till he appeared to me on the side platform of the open car.

“I have been looking for you,” said he, eagerly—and why he should seem so glad to see me I could not imagine—“but you must always have been on some other fellow’s car—Thorn Street! Change for Greyridge—you are not going to change? Good!—excuse me one moment—

“You do not know how good and home-like it seems to see you again! What do you hear from Nell?”

“Her first letter was in French—and very good French, too.”

“That was just to show you what she *did* know—dear old girl!”

A fellow-passenger, hearing only the last

THE MORAL IMBECILES

part of this enthusiastic address, turned and regarded me narrowly.

“The second is in English — her native tongue.” I took the letter out of my pocket —

“‘ DEAREST MARTHA,—It almost brakes my harte that I cannot have you and Forrester with me this devine wether . . .’” I then read aloud to him, in a low tone: “‘ Tell Forrester grandmamma had a new biblicul text that came with an advertissment by post, that she sent down to the servants’ parlor, becaus she said the goddy colors of it were appropriate for them. It was, “Look forhead and not back, look out and not in, and lend a hand.”’”

There could not have been time for this injunction to take effect. Indeed, I think Forrester Arundell had hardly comprehended it yet: he was abstractedly picking the bits of straw and dirt out of the fringe of an old, old lady’s shawl; it had escaped through the space in the seat back of her, and was sweeping the floor.

“Laddis Street!” No one getting off or on, he continued his occupation with the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

fringe assiduously, then tucked it in tenderly out of harm's way, without her observation.

"Bemis Street!" The very old lady, who was without an attendant, beckoned him feebly to stop. He sprang off, and, disregarding her trembling hand—instead of allowing her to climb down painfully from the high platform with only such small aid—he took her in his arms and set her slowly down as if she had been priceless porcelain. A grateful smile lightened her pallid old face, and he leaped back to his car with a low sweep of his conductor's cap.

"'109' 's rather soft on the *girls*," said one of two unkempt individuals, smoking on the rear seat.

"I'll tell you!" said Forrester, who had evidently been meditating all this while. "I can get Dick Thurston to take my place, down at the station—he and I change off, Sunday nights—and I'll go to church with you. May I?"

"Why—yes."

"I know what church you go to. You go to the true old blue."

"Well?"

"Here we are!—now, just a minute!

THE MORAL IMBECILES

This is charming ! I haven't been to church with a lady for years, Miss Scheffer." He pulled a soft felt hat out of his pocket, and crammed his cap into that receptacle. He gave a pull at each side of his mustache. "Excuse me for prinking on the street. I've worn out my gloves ; besides, I can't finger the change with them. You won't be ashamed of me?"

His light hair was parted in the middle and gave evidence of the most vigorous natural growth ; his white felt hat had taken, to say the least, a very hopeful cant ; he was gigantic and brigandish-looking, and one of his boots was waxing near that supplicatory condition which cries for a patch.

"Oh no !" I said. "I am rather shabby myself."

"Are you ? I had never noticed it." A long-breathing sigh, like the one he had given in the parlor at the college, whistled through his teeth. "Let's sit on the back seat, so we can whisper!"

I had another motive for acceding instantly to this request. Nearly all my professors —women—attended this church, and I had no fancy for marching conspicuously up the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

aisle with my stupendous and uniformed street-car conductor. I entered the very last pew, in which sat only a little negro boy. In his embarrassment at being thus invaded, having let me pass, he gathered himself close to me, leaving my escort at the other extreme.

"See here, Mr. Jackson," whispered that undaunted individual; "you came early to get the end-seat, didn't you?"

"Yeth, thir," replied the boy, who would have responded in the affirmative to anything, so ingratiating was Forrester's manner.

"Well, come over here and take it, Sonny. I'm no pig." In thus reversing the situation, the two knocked the hymn-books out of the rack. The juvenile element in the galleries regarded us with sparkling eyes.

Forrester deliberately replaced the books, stopping to read a selection from each one, then folded his arms, crossed his long legs, and leaned towards me :

"I get a lot of chaff from the fellows I left, Miss Scheffer, about what I am doing now. They think it's one of my daredev-bluffs, but it is not. I'm never going back to that sort of life again!"

T H E M O R A L I M B E C I L E S

"I will talk with you about it after service," I said.

"All right, mamma!" He looked straight into my face with his honest, laughing eyes, and showed the whole two rows of his mastiff teeth at me.

A look of disappointment encircled the galleries as he now straightened himself up with an air of adamantine seriousness. But when we rose and sang, we became again the cynosure of many eyes. Some in the audience even turned around to look.

So jubilant and profound a bass as issued from the lungs of Forrester Arundell I had never heard. My voice—all voices—seemed borne on it like a bird on ocean billows. As Madam Parmenter turned a sidelong glance, I felt the blood in my face, but my brigand sang on triumphantly.

"What do you say to walking home, Miss Scheffer?"—a delicious sigh!—"it will be so much longer."

"I prefer it," I said, hurriedly, seeing a group I knew waiting for a car at the corner.

"Take my arm, won't you, please? Nell always takes my arm. She and the fine young ladies in her set used to say they could walk

THE MORAL IMBECILES

miles with me and not tire. I'm not bad to walk with—if you only will— You don't touch me! You act as if I was contamination!" A hot flush came to his face; his lips quivered. I put my painfully mended glove on his arm.

Here was I, who, all the days of my girlhood, had walked alone, while the village youth escorted my fairer and merrier sisters, here was I, at last—the unsought and sedate—walking home from evening meeting on the arm of a jaunty giant of six feet two, with his hat cocked perilously near the verge of his head.

"Would you mind," I inquired, "putting your hat forward just a little?"

"What! Oh, Miss Scheffer, will you pardon me? My hair's so rough I can never tell where the confounded thing is. Nell and that set used to push it back; they said it made me picturesque! Ha, ha! but you've never a good word for me, Miss Scheffer. There! Is it right now?"

"You look as though you were masked for house-breaking," I replied, laughing in spite of myself.

"Well, now? Have I got the right caper

THE MORAL IMBECILES

now? Yes? It shall always be worn that way—always,” said he, sturdily, and with impressive gravity.

He now marched on with me as though we had become affiliated by special bonds in a compact in which words were unnecessary.

“Do you find your new life very hard?” said I, at last, by way of breaking this family silence.

“Not a bit!” said he, joyously. “I’m *working*—for an object!”

“That is good.”

“Good!—it’s bliss! I’m not only going to prove myself to my grandmother, but in the first place I’m running this course for a love at first meeting—yes, sir—and, by all that’s true, a first-love, too!”

“I am more than glad that you have a friend who is such an incentive to you.”

He sniffed, chuckled, and bore me along for a few steps at something of a ball-room galop.

“Do you know, I thought nobody cared really about me, and when Nell did something that was just the hardest pull on her that anything could be, to come and look after me—

“And when you—you—consented to come

THE MORAL IMBECILES

down and see me, and flung right out at me from the shoulder, and sent me down.

"At first I coughed 'knocked out,' but now I'm up in the ring, Miss Scheffer, and bloody for the fight—excuse me, I'd talk the last edition of the grammar to you, on my soul, if I knew it, but I mean business, you see, and that's putting the case on the bee-line."

"I understand, and I wish you the victory."

"Do you! Do you, though! I wonder if I shall get it! My grandmother Arundell 'll sneak around a corner and chip through the cellar and beat a wire-fence, but she'll always get her own way. Nell's lofty, but Nell, somehow, always skirts around the reefs and comes out with her own particular flag flying. I wonder if I'm one of 'em!" He became absorbed in almost palpable meditation.

"Good-night," I said, at the gate.

He seemed not to hear me. "Miss Scheffer, this is straight: I've been bad enough in some ways, but no woman in this world has any cause to reproach me." He lifted his hat and looked at me. "And Nell says—now this isn't conceit: you know I'm bound to be rich any way in the end; she and I are the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

heirs straight, and the law settles that—she says there's not a girl in her set, and it's the toney set, but would have me if I came back. But I don't want any of those girls."

"Well," said I, knowing that my mouth was taking its humorously cool expression, "that is a dilemma, I should think, you could avoid with care."

"I want somebody else."

"I should recommend, then," I said, laughing, "your paying your attentions in that quarter."

"Miss Scheffer, you may be the eruditest young woman in this institution—they say so—but allow me to say that, on some trails, you—walk—tremendous—slow." He was white and his hand shook the gate.

"It's *you* I'm going to *try* for!" He swung his hat, adjusted it with sledge-hammer emphasis in the position I had recommended, and strode away.

"He is insane!" I gasped. "They always hung to me; they always obeyed me." I got to my room and sank down into a chair. In the mirror opposite I saw only a pair of big, gloomy, savage black eyes.

"What a specimen for love at first meet-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ing!" I commented. "And he two years my junior!—with no brains and no character! Pah! I will never see him again!"

I drew my books to me and buried this hugely abortive romance in the pages of my pet science.

CHAPTER VI

IT was a week after this that a maid came to my door.

“A gentleman to see you in the drawing-room, Miss Scheffer.”

I took the card—it was a cheap one—and the bit of paper thoughtfully wrapped about it to keep it clean had inadvertently still been left to enfold it. I took out this guarded kernel, and read, “Forrester Arundell.”

“Tell him that I am very busy indeed,” I said, “and cannot possibly see him.”

No further message ensued, and I returned to my work.

And now, instead of the usually fascinating terms of my text-book, I began to see intrusive characters, in a type befitting the head-lines of the most atrocious newspaper:

“After all, he was doing bravely, bearing scorn from his associates and hardship in his lot. A congenial employment—any employment—was not easy to find in these days,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

even for one specially endowed, and he—he had done at once the best he could."

The insistent characters still forced themselves on the page.

" You have always said 'heroism' is not specific, but a matter of circumstances. He—in his stupid way—was conquering himself at last. If he was morally and intellectually childish, so much the more excuse might be made for him, so much the more due to his fortitude and constancy.

" And if he should sink back!"

Katherine Eleanor Arundell, too, took up her position before me, all in white, and her eyes regarded me.

" I will give up my work—my ambition—and attend to grown-up babies—to imbeciles!" I cried, wrathfully, in my heart.

" Other people, through infinite toil, may have a right to some existence of their own, but it is not for me!"

I nursed the bitterness of this for several days, and said my prayers over it. "At least, you might have been friendly and kind," suggested the angel, who turned a forbiddingly cold shoulder to my orthodox petitions.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Another unique epistle came from Eleanor (I had not answered the last). In it was an enclosure addressed simply to "Forrester." "Why does she not address him by post?" I snapped. "It is as though I comprised the responsibility of the whole unknown family!" But I was somewhat subdued, and I stopped at the car-station in the course of my "constitutional."

"Is Forrester Arundell here?"

"Jim!" called the authority I had addressed, to a man in the restaurant devouring a piece of pie by means only of the choice implement of his fist. "Where's 'Forty'?"

"He's been laid off a week! He's had a hell of a cold! He's coming on again tomorrow!" bawled the mouth of pie, unconscious of my presence.

"I will see him, then," I said, replacing the note in my pocket.

"I thought Forty was iron!" I heard, as I walked away.

"So he is. Forty's all right! Rickless as ever! Giv' his overcoat to old Rheumatiz! Old Rheumatiz has got ten eatin' off'n him, you know!"

The next day, as I took my prescribed

THE MORAL IMBECILES

stroll, I glanced at the conductor's place on the rear platform of each passing car. They were box-cars now, and the weather was very cold.

I saw him before he saw me—his cap rigorously placed. Demurely I hailed the car. He was busy till we were running up past the line of traffic. At last I was the only occupant.

"I came for the ride and to give you this letter," I said. "I am going up to the terminus and then back again."

He took the letter, thanking me. His eyes looked heavy and hollow, his clothes dilapidated, his hands chapped and cold. "I've been a little sick and it threw me off," he said, blushing. "I had to go on living just the same, and I was not earning, but I shall spruce up again now!"

"I want you to promise either to come to see me, or to go to church with me again next Sunday night," I continued, directly.

"Promise! I'll be there! I'd rather go to call," he added, flushing again—there was plain need of a patch on his boot now—"it will be quieter."

"Very well. And I want to say that I am

THE MORAL IMBECILES

proud and glad to have you for a friend, Mr. Arundell—if it can be any pleasure to you,” I added, “to come occasionally to see an old woman like me.”

“Old woman!” He was straining the switch-rod across his knee, and now he snapped it in two. “If anybody else said that, I’d brain ‘em!”

“Well,” said I, after the crash, as soothingly as a discreet school-mistress with the recalcitrant of her flock, “at least, I am years older than you, and I am very glad of it. And that reminds me. I am going to have confidence in you; and the little jest you brought up the other night—”

“What little jest? That I’m going to try some time to win you for my wife? If that was a jest, you may tar and feather me, and all the town may help!”

“Must never be repeated.”

“I know it looks black for me now. I know it looks ridiculous to you now.” A cough, as impressive as his bass, shook him; he glanced down at his shabby clothes, and the hot flush overspread his face. Coming to a turn, he went out to apply his broken switch-rod.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“I understand,” said he, coming back—as softly and insinuatingly as a weaned child—“that I can come up and see you my Sunday nights?”

“And you understand me?”

“Yes, mamma dear!” The teeth flashed merrily once more across his lugubriously thinning visage.

He kept boyishly close to me on the return trip. As the fares began to come in—tenderly attentive to the cripples and babies—he cheerfully neglected the financial returns to come and stand over me, gazing out of the window with a contented possessive smile on his face, and his hands sunk peacefully in his pockets.

I got off as soon as I could, and concluded that I would not go to seek my spiritual patient any more on the line of the street-cars.

CHAPTER VII

SOME days before the opening of the Christmas vacation I received a telegram.

It was a strange and palpitating event to me, who had no sphere of social acquaintance, only one relative—my brother—and a stepmother, both of vigorous constitution.

I tore it open and read :

“Miss Arundell is ill and entreats that you will come to her at once. Answer and fare paid, via B & A, car the ‘Vincent,’ seat No. 12. You will be met at station.—Doctor Clitus Latimer, New York City.”

The empiricism of illness had been my life-long monitor, and now I neither groaned nor hesitated. Returning an answer, I packed my small wardrobe and took the train for New York. Tender and pitiful thoughts of Katherine Eleanor Arundell now filled my breast. My interrupted vocation, it is fair to say, did not once appeal to me.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I left my luxurious chair—the first time I had ever travelled in such fashion—and hastened into the station on my arrival, looking sharply about me.

A pair of beautiful seal-fur arms took me unawares; the scent of violets was in my nostrils, the imprint of kisses on my face—and there before me, trustfully, radiantly glad, in the glow of such abundant health as Providence had given her, stood the chief of my moral imbeciles.

“Oh, Eleanor, how could you?” I cried, shocked to a degree that had not yet gasped its way to indignation.

“Hush!” said she, gravely. “You must be careful. I nearly died of it once. When I heard you would come—it was almost a miracle. Give me your check, dearest—this way!”

The door of a carriage, austere in its elegance, was opened for us. “Drive home, Michael!” That functionary touched his hat at the command, and we rolled on magnificently.

“What *is* the matter with you?” I demanded, unappalled by this exterior glory, looking searchingly at my companion, who

THE MORAL IMBECILES

was sparkling and rose-flushed with the wintry air.

“Doctor Latimer will tell you. Don’t question me. Let me be happy, now I have you again. I never was one to take such fancies to people, really, Martha. I never had a girl friend—not *real, deep friend*—before.”

She sank back with the same air of serene possession that her brother had displayed on a recent occasion.

“I surely wish to be your friend,” I said. “And I, too, am glad to see you, and to see you, apparently, so well; do you know how much you alarmed me? But now, since you have recovered, I must go back to my work —by the next train.”

“You wish me to have a relapse, then?” she said. Both she and her brother, among their other naïve accomplishments, could change color at will, and now she went quite white.

“Not at all,” I continued, with cynical resignation; “we will go on. When will your doctor be in to see you again?”

“This evening. He is grandpapa’s doctor, too. We have employed him a great

THE MORAL IMBECILES

many years, and he is perfectly devoted to us."

"It appears so."

We stopped before a brown-stone mansion, and an individual whom I took at first to be one of the special reverend dignitaries of the established church opened the door.

"This is Watson!" said Eleanor, bounding past him gayly. "This is *my* property, Watson. I do not wish any of the maids. I do not wish any one. She's *mine*. *I'll* take care of her."

I was led into a most gracious room. Spread out on the bed were three new gowns of my own sombre sort, but fine and tasteful beyond anything I had ever worn—a fur-lined cloak, also black—and a bonnet, which I was amazed to find being already fitted to my head, my expansive old felt hat having been removed by the same dexterous fingers.

The luxurious cloak was flung around me with a swing, and I was propelled at a rush to the mirror.

"There!" said Eleanor, triumph—and no other quality—in her eyes—"did not I tell you so?"

"You certainly did not," I rejoined.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“What does this mean? Whose clothes are you masquerading me in? Let me have them off, and behold your next play—let there be frequent changes of scene—I am entirely at your service!”

She had planned her rally and grand charge, and, like all her acts of finesse, it was none the less ingenuous for having been premeditated.

“Do you know,” said she, regarding me with large and solemn eyes, “whose hands made these things—that is, a great deal of them—for love of you, Martha? Martha Scheffer, it was almost like religion to me! And I stole your measure from one of your dresses one day when I was in your room—you will see if they are not just perfect! And never wearying, and hoping and praying all the while to be good and brave like you, and I think you will like the shoulder-fit better—just hoping and praying. And now will you go and break her heart? For, if you do not wear them, it will seem to me as if you think me beneath you and can never have any hope of me, forever, and forever, and forever,” she wailed, pallid in view of such an eternity.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Eleanor, your poor brother is positively getting needy, actually needing patches. How can I wear these things?"

"That is the very reason," said she, recovering her superior and smiling sang-froid. "You read your Bible? You must get acquainted with grandmamma."

"I once flattered myself on some mental resource," I replied, gently, "but your logic is beyond me, Eleanor."

"It is not logic," said she, religiously; "it is truth. Forrester is on my heart all the time, Martha. Ever since I began superintendent—making those things, I have been saying my prayers, Martha Scheffer; and if you wear them, I shall keep right on, and keep on planning."

"The prayers are good," I rejoined, with the utmost gentleness. "As for the planning—"

"I think," she said, "it is wicked to settle down on our prayers, and not plan, too!"

"Could you give me a sort of synopsis of your plans in general—something concise, that would appeal to my understanding?"

She sighed. She had a smile to melt a heart of stone.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"You must trust me, love," she said.
"This is the gown you are to wear down to dinner." The arms went round me again; the scent of violets, with the cool cheeks against mine. The door closed softly behind her, and she was gone.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHY don't we ever have some boiled corned-beef and cabbage? It's nothing now-a-days but crab-shells, and lark-bones, and fiddle-de-dee!"

The nurse, in white apron and cap, who was in attendance on my host, picked up the bird's wing he had dropped on the floor, erased the gravy from his trousers with a napkin, and again took up her position behind him with a perfectly immovable countenance. Watson, the butler, observed a like decorum.

I had never before dined at the tables of the opulent, and I felt that it was anything but monotonous.

Madam Arundell observed the high-bred serenity of unconsciousness. Katherine Eleanor, to whose bed of illness I had been summoned, devoted herself with choice discrimination to the viands before her. My poor host revelled in loquaciousness.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Glad to have you with us again, Martha. Sensible name. How did you enjoy your trip to Italy?"

"Very much!" I responded, finding myself again at my familiar occupation, as foster-mother to the insane.

"Deuced dirty place, *I* think. Glad to have you home. Look as though you had some sense—sharp, keen eye. Mostly fools around here—fools and hypocrites. Can you play backgammon?"

"Yes."

"Watson! have the board brought out after dinner, and some liquors. Martha and I are going to play backgammon. D'ye hear?"

"Certainly, sir. I attended. Immejately after dinner, sir. It shall be done as you stipulate, sir."

"D—n your Pope and Milton grammar, Watson! Why don't you talk English?"

The nurse gathered up a medley of lobster from the carpet beside him, pulled out a stalk of celery from his shirt-bosom, brushed him a little, and resumed her position.

"What are you always mussing over me for, Mrs. Rose?" said the object of these at-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

tentions, not discourteously but a little petulantly. "Putting me here in a bib-and-tucker at my own table, and I've made my millions! Umph! All fools! Had me in an insane asylum, only my brother prevented it. Just because I wanted to be charitable—charitable, Martha. Go to church, and you're bawled at, 'Charity, charity!' Come home and practise it, and you're trotted off to the mad-house. But they can't circumvent me. I can sign checks yet! Eh, my little Nell, over there! Grandpa can sign checks yet, can't he?"

Eleanor paused in the consumption of the dainties before her long enough to assume a brilliantly beautiful color. "Of course you can, grandpapa!"

"Where's the boy? Where's Forrester? Haven't you got him home yet? What did he do? Couple of hundred dollars—nothin' but a boy, then—and all in the family. Wrong—wrong, of course—but motherless boy—always had to go on the street when he wanted a good time—wouldn't have him and his mates clutterin' in here—ye know ye wouldn't, Laura. Not a base thing in him—did it for a lark—wouldn't do a base thing

THE MORAL IMBECILES

for money. Sent him off to redeem his character. Pooh! Set of hypocrites and fools, Martha!"

The lady of the house preserved her immaculate serenity. Eleanor ate on. The attendants remained unconscious, the nurse involved now in gathering up an interesting collection of scattered edibles.

"I reckon Martha here 'll find the boy and bring him home. Watson!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Bring out my writing materials after dinner. Martha must have a check. Why haven't you called on me before, Martha? How you been supporting yourself? Only sensible one in the family pauperized, by God. Watson!"

"Yes, sir. I attended, sir. Immejately after dinner, sir. It shall be done as you have enjoined upon me, sir."

"D—n your Dryden and Goldsmith, Watson! D'ye think I'm goin' to be fed this stuff? Hand me the spoon! Thank you, Mrs. Rose. Why don't we have apple-slump or punkin-pie once 'n a while, Laura? Feedin' a man in midwinter on a squirting lot of frozen pap all on the drip!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

These terms were fully realized as Mrs. Rose swathed and encircled her charge with napkins, fortifying both him and the area about him at all points.

“Thank you, Mrs. Rose. Here!—take me out of my winding-sheet! I’m done dribbling, thank God! Take the coppers off my eyes, and the tuberoses and ‘gate’s ajar’ off my bosom. Fools, Martha! Come, Martha! We must attend to that check.”

“You promised me a game of backgammon, Mr. Arundell.”

“Hear that, Laura? Hear that, Nell? Mrs. Rose! Watson! Ain’t after her own interests. Thinks of an old man’s pleasure first. D—n it, Martha, you make an old man cry! Well, well—we’ll let it go, for a little, but I’ve got you in mind, my daughter. I’ve got you in mind. Where you been any way, Martha? I’ll have my lawyers, and nobody shall hold me. Watson! That board!”

“Yes, sir! It is prepared, sir. And your reclining-chair in the right position. Now, sir, let me assist you—not too precipitate, sir.”

“Watson, you are a longitudinal old ass!”

“Yes, sir.”

CHAPTER IX

THE nurse took up her stoically attentive attitude beside him, and the backgammon-board was placed between my host and me.

“Mustn’t try to let me beat, Martha. Hate to be coddled. Play your best?”

“Certainly.”

“Very much attached to me, Mrs. Rose!” he said, turning with some cynicism, but not unkindly, to that substantial shadow. “Well, well—let her look on, Martha. Estimable woman—nothing to do—hangs around me. House full of dawdling idiots—somebody got to keep ‘em.”

Mrs. Rose, with unmoved equanimity, gathered up his dice from a jocund dance towards the piano, and replaced them in the box. He threw, at last, with a decision that sent the chessmen scattering in all directions. His attentive shadow, after faithful and long-continued search, set them again on the board.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Was that sixes I threw—some weeks ago—there, Martha?"

"Yes."

"Sixes. Ha! ha! Mrs. Rose, see here, make yourself useful. Move these men along—my hand trembles a little. Play with caution, Mrs. Rose—with caution."

That gifted individual, without further effort, assumed at once a transparent air of premeditation. Before it became necessary for me to make my first throw, my host was peacefully sleeping with his mouth wide open.

"Do you wish to continue the game, Miss Scheffer?" said the nurse.

"No," I replied, and turned to the other occupants of the room, among whom was now Doctor Clitus Latimer, the obliging sender of telegrams. I did not hesitate to direct towards him a glance of frank indignation, which, I will do him the justice to say, he received without dream of a blush. He rose and bowed :

"I am one of the most enthusiastic, Miss Scheffer, in welcoming your sex to our fraternity. I hear you are entering the profession. I approve of it. I consider the co-operation of your sex indispensable."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Well, I am not *rushing* towards the goal,” I rejoined, and although I spoke in extremely quiet tones, I felt that Madam Arundell was shocked that any one should carry into good society, and that without apparent reason, such a villainously expressive countenance.

“You will arrive there with just so much the more practical ability, Miss Scheffer,” he said.

“I am aware,” I replied, “that it is mainly practical.”

Madam Arundell seemed afflicted with a thought that I might fling the furniture. “What a charming day it has been, doctor!” she exclaimed.

“Charming! You are taking the capsules regularly, Mrs. Arundell?”

“I obey *you*, always, doctor,” she said, with a sweet laugh.

My host woke up with a baffled snore. “Who’s there? heh? heh? Oh—earning another five dollars prescribing sugar-plums to the women, eh, doctor? Well, well—welcome to it. Always dressed up like a window-form—black whiskers, pink cheeks—always welcome here, doctor; *somebody*

THE MORAL IMBECILES

got to support 'em. Martha! Where's Martha?"

"She is here, Forrester," replied Madam Arundell, soothingly, with the faintest possible tinge of irony in her voice.

"Glad to have ye home. Mustn't give the old gentleman the slip again, Martha—lost without ye. Laura!"

"Yes, Forrester."

"Come over here and we'll have a game of backgammon, Laura. Let the young folks talk—needn't be afraid. *Martha* ain't go'n' to take up with any of your standard-cut, robin-breasted window-forms, he! he! nor any of your d——d sugar-plums, either."

Madam Arundell rose with a resigned sigh. The nurse, seeing her charge so tranquilly sleeping, had retired to the basement for a little jaunting with the domestics. Katherine Eleanor, with the Arundell trait of easy sleeping, had been for some time reclining on the sofa in soft and sound repose; her saint-like features lay in sweet relief against the crimson velvet.

Madam Arundell touched the electric bell before seating herself; the nurse appeared;

THE MORAL IMBECILES

the throwing of dice and scattering of chessmen recommenced.

"What is the matter with Miss Arundell?" said I, fixing on Doctor Latimer a look devoid of all sentiment save the one "not to let go" till I had a reasonable answer.

"Miss Scheffer, I have been the family physician here for fifteen years." The scornful curl on my own lips was suddenly met by an injured sneer on his part. "The offices are not those of a quack."

He picked up a book and stared angrily at the cover. "It is about once in a decade that Miss Katherine Eleanor Arundell sets out to have her own way. If, knowing the case, you have any counter-stimulant to prescribe save immediate graceful concession to her wishes, kindly produce it!"

"I am not vilifying Miss Arundell. In fact, I never knew a sweeter disposition. But, as I said, a few times strikingly in the flight of years, she has set her heart on some object. Once we stood firm. I saw spasms, fits, the flesh empurpled, shrieks, ravings, and at last a solid hour of unaffected death-like unconsciousness. Do not misunderstand me; she is, normally, tranquil, sweet, for-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

giving, but when, semi-annually, as it were, we hear the mutterings of that distant cyclone, we do not propose expedients, we do not discuss metaphysical subtleties — we obey.”

“I consider it all nonsense.”

“You are very kind to say so! When Miss Arundell—some days ago—expressed a desire to send for her friend—Miss Scheffer—her grandmother objected. You may be able to imagine reasons why Mrs. Arundell should prefer to keep her domestic circle exclusive and retired! Well, the signs appeared. The grandmother yielded, not only speedily, but, I may almost say, fawningly.

“You are aware, Miss Scheffer, that family traits, not to be considered in the pathological sense of physical subversion, and certainly not of insanity, yet sometimes reach an abnormal state of development.”

“I am aware,” I said, “that wilfulness has sometimes been whipped out of people!”

“I should say,” said he, with an enraged smile, “that you could hardly put yourself forward as a successful example of such caustic discipline!”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"They're quarrellin', Laura—he! he!—look at 'em! Red as lobsters! I told you Martha was enough for him."

"Mr. Beeman Price!" said Watson, at the door.

I looked up, and saw a stout iron-gray man, with features sardonically sordid; a large wart grew out of one ear, his hands were soiled, and he held a stick in one corner of his hard mouth.

"*Dear Mr. Price!*" said Mrs. Arundell, rising, "you have come at the right time. We were sinking into family ennui."

"Pish! Great 'ongwee'! Martha and the doctor, over there, were just getting up a fight! 'Shamed of ye, Laura—always after money-bags—got enough of our own,'" asserted our host, nonplussed, and slightly offended at being left alone with his nurse and his demoralized backgammon-board.

"Eleanor!" cried Madam Arundell, in her peculiarly winning voice, "Eleanor, here is Mr. Price!"

Eleanor opened her dream-entangled eyes, and realized the fact. "Grandmamma," said she, peevishly, "I'm dead with sleep," and turned again to repose.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Doctor Latimer looked over at me and leered.

Beeman Price reached out facetiously with his cane. The tip of one of Eleanor's slippers feet was visible under her robe; he gave her foot a decisive jog with his cane.

The girl sprang to a sitting posture like a flame, snatched the fan at her side, and threw it with smashing force against his foul shirt-bosom.

He laughed. Madam Arundell's delicate old face was red with mortification. "What conduct!" she exclaimed. "We are really becoming barbarians, Mr. Price. We have been so long, in a sense, shut off from society."

"'Barbarians!' We ain't, neither!" said our host. "We're a lot of d----d fools!—all except Martha. Served him right! He ain't go'n' to have her. Leave it to you, Martha. Leave everything to you—goin' to bed. Sick of it—fiddlin' around here with idiots. Where's my night-nurse? He! he! Where's the Rev. Solibeg? Ring the bell, Mrs. Rose."

A grave young man in spectacles appeared. He stiffly offered his arm to our host.

"Good-night!" Leaning on the young

THE MORAL IMBECILES

man's arm, he tottered over to me. "Good-night, Martha. Glad to have ye home. God bless ye! Mustn't go off and leave the poor old man again. Look out for things. I depend on ye, Martha—depend on ye." His voice trembled, he patted my hand an instant, paternally, with his soft, trembling old fingers. "Good-night!"

"He seems quite elated by Miss Scheffer's advent," remarked the doctor, in a voice suggestive of pleasantry.

"He fails," sighed Mrs. Arundell. "Poor man! I do not consider him accountable for anything. And," she continued, as if addressing Beeman Price alone in personal confidence, "his brother having insisted on his being relieved from all guardianship, in one sense, his actions, if not watched, would be simply disastrous."

"Ought to be shut up—shut up," clapped the mouth of Beeman Price.

Eleanor looked as though she were reaching for another missile.

"Going to the play with me to-morrow night, Miss Eleanor?" said her admirer. "Very idle, expensive business, but I'm forgiving—see! I'll do anything you wish."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"No, I am not! I wish you would take that dirty stick out of your mouth!"

"Eleanor!"

"All right. *Some* men chew tobacco, my pretty lady. But I obey. Old position reversed, they say. *We* say, 'I obey' now. Ur-r-r! Any other commands?"

Eleanor looked as though she were about to suggest in detail other vivid needs of personal cleanliness.

"Eleanor," interposed Madam Arundell, "I really think you are half asleep yet. You will come to dine, Sunday, as usual, dear Mr. Price? There are some matters about which I wish to consult with you. I really am so dependent upon you for advice."

"Hear that, Miss Eleanor? But your grandmother's adviser ain't good enough to advise you, is he?"

"No!"

"She is foolish with sleep. Eleanor, you may be excused and retire to your room. You certainly are not fit for any society except that of your maid."

Eleanor came over to me, slipped her arm through mine, raised me, looking, meanwhile,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

as if she had no other prop or stay in all the world.

No sooner were we in the hall than she burst into passionate weeping.

"Come," I said, "where is your room? Do not let them hear you boo-hooing here."

"She weeps—my affliction! She weeps!" Another aspect of this discursive household now presented itself—a middle-aged Frenchwoman, with a countenance of tragic woe. Eleanor clung to me. Together, we put this special moral imbecile to bed. An Irish house-maid was dawdling officiously about the room. She sniffed, not too audibly, and sang in resolute murmurs:

"The old man says to his wife, says he,
Says he and says I,
And says I, and says he."

"Mar'an!" said the Frenchwoman, with sarcasm, "you have a tune indeed! Ravishment! *Mon Dieu!* 'Ce ce' and 'ci ci!' Pah!"

The vocalist did not reply. She had an air of pent-up contemplation:

"The old man says to his wife, says he,
Says he and says I,
And says I, and says he."

CHAPTER X

It had been my firm intention to tell these gifted of wealth and station, before I retired for the night, that I should take the first train back to my college in the morning—to point out to Eleanor with impressive seriousness her unheard-of—nay, more—her wicked conduct, in sending for me as she had done—and to depart.

Instead of that I had been obliged to do my utmost to administer consolation to her. White, quivering, with tear-stained eyes, she had at last moaned and trembled into sleep. It was not the tempest of which Doctor Latimer had told; but evidently she had reached some signal crisis in her stratagem of life!

I found myself, at near midnight, in my own room, in an amazing state of mind.

I smiled, therefore, as I brushed out my hair, to see how firm was the brown hand that flew up and down at this occupation.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Here, in surrounding sumptuousness, under the gas-lights, a hand that had much swept, delved, and brewed, held the rod of the rural school-mistress, battled with illness in its direst forms—a brown, unlovely, virile, heartless hand.

“Thwarted again! but I can as well make my adieu in the morning,” I declared.

Out of the shadows came another hand, soft, palsied, white, and fell on mine. “Leave it with you, Martha. Depend upon you, Martha.”

Was there ever anything so preposterous? I shook the feeble ghostly old hand off. It reached out again from the shadows and arrested mine. I sank down by the bed. “These people are nothing to me,” I prayed; “they, with their servants for every need. It is right for me to go my own hard-earned way at last, and at once. But I cannot think!”

The brown hands clasped the bewildered head to press it into resolution; the afflicted head at last began to sink low; the Arundell doom of sleep was upon me.

“Are you awakened, mum? Breakfast at half after eight, if you please, mum.” Wat-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

son intoned at my door. "Mary Ann has probably been deliquescent in awaking you, mum."

I dressed with resolved hands, but still with a fretful and disturbed head, and descended to the chaste silver and elaborate service of the breakfast-table. I was alone.

"Mrs. Arundell presents her compliments, mum, and begs that you will excuse her valedictorian habit of taking her morning repast in her room. Mr. Arundell is not yet awakened, mum. Miss Eleanor has a headache, but sends her affection and will be with you presently. The fruit is always to be recommended, mum. As the poet says—"

"Watson," I said, "will you see that I have a cab to catch the noon express?"

Watson, in broadcloth so choice that it seemed hardly material at all, stood firm and moved his reverend lips:

"It must not be, mum."

"And why not, pray?" I blazed, scornfully, with malignant eyes. "Certainly, then, I will order my own."

He closed the hall door, where the flitting form of a servant, now and then, appeared, and stepped softly to me.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Pardon me humbly, mum. You have observed the peculiar exegesis of this household? Bear with me; did you commune last night with your God, mum?”

“I will have an orange, Watson.” The orange was sweet; my face was contemptuous and sour.

“The fish is specially to be recommended, mum. We are, as a family, rather debilitated. As the poet says,

“‘Swate bells jangling out their tune!’”

I laughed. Watson’s prelatical countenance expressed satisfaction. “You don’t like the ice-water? It shall be modified, mum.” He trotted away with the great silver pitcher. “Wat-son,” he murmured, returning, “son of Watts! Pardon the personal illusion to myself—accounts for my constant leaning to the classics. Watts!—a religious poet of the early centuries, rather dogmatical. I, myself, am wholly latitudinal, mum.”

I smiled. The aroma of my coffee was a revelation.

“Beware of Mary Ann, mum.” It was with officious dignity that Watson now bent

THE MORAL IMBECILES

towards my ear. "Permit me to whisper 'caution!' mum."

"Ah! Is she the one who sings 'Says he and says I,' Watson?"

"The same."

"She seems no more dangerous than the rest," I was pleased to commune with myself. But Watson did not mind; his sacerdotal eye rested sternly on the door; he sprang forward and opened it. Mary Ann, apparently merely passing with her dust-cloth, flapped him over the head with it. A scene ensued of a sort with which experience, amid less ornate surroundings, had made me familiar. I contemplated it from time to time, as I calmly pursued my breakfast. Archbishopric coat-tails and menial white apron flashed before me in vivid warfare. Slaps and pushes, deliberate rather than alarmingly violent, formed the scheme of action. The stout house-maid conquered; the time-honored upholder of the Arundell family arms lay gently sprawling on the floor.

I assumed not to have observed this as he entered, soon after, with unimpaired dignity.

"I find it necessary sometimes," he enlightened me, slightly out of breath, "to ad-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

minister chastisement in the case of some of the lower servants. I have expressly forbidden Mary Ann to bear the morning letters to their precipitants. I wrested them from her, though with difficulty. Yours repose on the table in the library, mum."

I had the fewest possible letters in any place. That here, where I had passed but one strange night, my morning post receipts should be spoken of in the plural was edifying, and, I believed, another phase of Watson's always competent grandeur of speech.

Yet it *was one*. Having regarded with indifferent amusement the magazines, now nearly a month old, lying with uncut pages on the table, Eleanor's specious novel, turned flat to keep the place, the newspapers, placed in a position to absorb hygienic warmth from the fire, I did glance farther and saw a letter.

It bore my name in characters too atrociously bold to suggest doubt. I opened it:

"**MY DEAR MISS SCHEFFER**,—Nell telegraphed me you are with us. I never was more delighted at anything.

"I am doing fine, all over my cold, and got part of a new suite of clothes. I wear my hat plum, forevermore.

"I often think of what you said, I must not presume, and ask you to forgive me. But the first time I met you

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I turned from what I was. This is straight. But you are right. I had no right to presume till I was more worthy (which could never be), but you might think more so. And I prommis never to be gilty by act or speech again to presume to express affection till I may be more so.

“Yours with the love of all my harte,

“FORRESTER.”

CHAPTER XI

WITH this endearing and consistent effort in my hand, I still stood before the fire when Madam Arundell entered the room.

"Did you sleep well, dear Miss Scheffer?" she said, effusively.

"Here," I merely thought, "is another moral imbecile with a scheme."

She, too, closed the door confidentially.

"You are, I think," she murmured, in her peculiarly sweet voice, "one likely to be touched by the needs of affliction? My poor husband and my grandchild have taken such an instinctive liking to you, Miss Scheffer, let me add a reasonable word on my own account."

I was in a mood to smile rather bitterly at the lady's unconscious lack of flattery.

"Why not remain with us a while? I know that this is an unwarrantable request to make, absorbed as you are in your studies, but, I can assure you, the consequences will

THE MORAL IMBECILES

be very hard indeed for me to bear if you do not."

Whatever there may have been to criticise in this frank attitude of mind, she was angelically refined of feature and she was very old. The lace at her wrists trembled a little. Her eye fell on the letter, which I had made no attempt to conceal.

"Eleanor tells me you have her entire confidence. You know, then, that she is engaged to Mr. Price, and that the marriage is to take place early next month. She has always been a peculiar child, and the early death of her parents left me with responsibilities which now, especially with my age and delicate health, I really do not know how to cope with, Miss Scheffer. For her sake, above all, I shall be glad when she is married to this estimable man, of very, *very* great wealth."

She looked keenly and impressively at me, as though a god had been mentioned whose attributes I, as a poor student, could hardly appreciate.

I dangled the unfolded letter in my hand.

"Excuse me"—a bright red spot glowed in the centre of her still pretty, old cheeks—

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"as my eye glanced at the general style of your correspondent's handwriting, it reminded me of something familiar."

"It is a letter from your grandson."

"To you?"

"To me."

"Pray—"

"Let me read it to you. I have met him but three times in my life. He, like your granddaughter, has doubtless always been a peculiar child. Is it any wonder that you should wish to delegate, or, at least, share your maternal duties!"

I read in a voice certainly cool of all sentiment.

She looked steadfastly at me. "You are a sensible young woman!" she exclaimed, sharply. "Where is he?"

"He is conductor on a street-car in B—."

The red spots flamed vividly in her cheeks. "Is *that* the best he could accomplish? Instead of returning, and confessing to me his desire to reform—when turned, temporarily, for his own salvation, to his own resources—he chooses to absent himself indefinitely, and to plunge instead into the utmost disgrace!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I cannot think that. I am a working-woman myself, you know."

Her face turned white and calm again, but with an indefinable, inflexible stamp of contempt. "He would better continue, then, at his very dignified and remunerative employment!"

"I quite agree with you."

"Well"—she drew a long sigh—"I esteem you as a very sensible woman, Miss Scheffer. You regard our sad family confidences, of course, as sacred?"

"It has become the business of my life in all ways to foster them."

"And now as to Eleanor?"

"Well—as to Eleanor?"

"Beeman Price has not a vice, Miss Scheffer. Consider that, in this age and city! Not a single vice."

"Yes, he struck me as being very economical."

"It is well, is it not," sighed Madam Arundell, plaintively, and, I must say, with a very sanctimonious face, "to be economical in the matter of vices? Dear Miss Scheffer, you have the most remarkable influence over my precious child. The sooner such a capri-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

cious nature is settled, the better, is it not? And with a guide so trustworthy! You alone seem to have any positive influence in the least with her. Will you not exert it to help me—”

“Where’s Martha?” The door swung open. “Oh, oh! Good-morning, Martha! Glad to have ye home again. How d’ do, Laura?—looking very pious this morning—up to mischief, I expect—he, he! Come over here in the light and read the papers to me, Martha. God bless ye! Ain’t one in the family can read except Laura, and she makes an everlastin’ psalm tune of it all. Come, come, Martha! Bless ye, my daughter.”

There were two enormous chairs in the sunny bay-window. He sat down in one, assisted by his valet, and smacked his lips with delectation.

“Read it right along, Martha—murders, divorce-suits—the whole business. Laura picks and prunes so damnably, I ain’t had a taste of news since you went away.”

He was very fine; he shone from his bath and was rosy-cheeked from his breakfast, every particle of which had been removed from his polished person, except a small hot-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

water urn containing the remains of some fried pan-fish, which the attendant, now discovering protruding from his coat-tail pocket, bore gravely away.

I began a tragedy in the *Times*, he leaning towards me with his mouth wide open and a look of great relish in his kind old eyes. I had read but a few sentences when his voice suddenly interrupted me:

“Has Augusta called yet, Laura?”

“Forrester, dear, you have asked Miss Scheffer to have the kindness to read to you, and now really you are interrupting her.”

“No, I ain’t, either. Martha wants to know whether Augusta’s called as well as I. Has she?”

“No.”

“Well, why don’t she get along early and get it over with?”

“Because she wishes to find you dressed and ready to receive her, I suppose.”

“Martha’s here now to entertain her. She might get along early and get it over with, I should think.”

After this I was conscious that he muttered a great deal and that his gaze turned continually to the window.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Presently I looked there myself. A stately equipage had stopped and a good and beaming face appeared at the carriage door; a footman held out his arms to her on one side; Watson, who had now arrived to supplement the scene, reached out to her from the other; a mature maid stood in the background. Thus, with one foot poised ponderously on the step, she was, without doubt, delivering some lengthy address; her lips moved, and her gloved finger was pointed in warning or persuasion at one or another of her obsequious audience.

On the solid earth she paused again. In alighting, her bonnet had hit against some obstacle and hung quite off her head. She seemed unconscious of the maid's efforts to restore it, pointing now at poor Watson, her countenance alive with benign emotion and her speech apparently flowing in a river.

"Laura, Laura! Here's Augusta, lecturin' as usual, with her bunnit on her ear!"

But Mrs. Arundell had left the room to meet her guest.

"Stay right where you are, Martha. Always stick by your poor old father, Martha."

After some considerable time, in which I

THE MORAL IMBECILES

read aloud to my host, while he conversed in a still louder tone with himself, the door opened, and *she*, with Madam Arundell in her wake, came in.

"Dear, dear Forrester!" she said, and having reached him, in a great deal of majesty of rustling raiment, she clasped both his hands in hers, and bent to him—"how are you, dear?"

"Pretty well—pretty well—very well indeed, 'Gusta. Take a chair, 'Gusta—lots of chairs. Watson! Watson!"

"Yes, sir," said that ubiquitous one.

"See that Mrs. John Arundell has a lounging-chair, Watson — comfortable one — big one 't she can lay back in."

"Place it right here, Watson," said the good lady—"beside my brother. And this," she said, temporarily coming over to hold me in her love—"this is the dear Miss Scheffer, of whom you and dear Eleanor have told me, Laura? I rejoice to see you. Are you well, dear?" As I rose she folded me with much choice lace and perfume of violets to her bosom.

"You are serving the Lord, dear?" she said, in a genuinely gentle voice.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I do not know," I replied. "I am rather confused. I hope so."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Arundell, speaking boldly, I will say, on my behalf, "she belongs to our fold, Augusta."

"Lot of sheep, eh?" said my perturbed host, and tried to laugh.

"Yes, dear Forrester," said Madam John Arundell, taking the chair which Watson had supplied arm to arm with that afflicted being's—"yes, dear, we are sheep, and we have a shepherd. Are you not ready yet, dear Forrester, to give your heart to Him?"

"Stay right where ye are, Martha." I had not moved. "Eh? What's that? Hearts?—don't want our hearts—everybody givin' Him their hearts! Wants our money too—wants our work—wants our lives—Bible says so. Start out to do it, and get chucked in the mad-house! Poor Lord Christ, wanderin' around—everybody givin' Him their hearts—no end o' hearts—nothin' else—sh'd think He'd be sick of it! Lots of hypocrites, stackin' up their money, and givin' Him their hearts! Don't want to hear anything more about it. Lay back in your chair, 'Gusta—nice chair—cost a hundred and fifty dollars,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

that chair. Glad to see ye, 'Gusta—how d' do? Lay back and take it easy, 'Gusta."

The two good ladies sighed. Madam John Arundell still retained her clasp on her brother's hand.

"Where is dear Eleanor?" she said.

"I do not know," replied madam, "I will have her called. Eleanor is always *very* remiss about appearing in the morning. Watson! have Miss Arundell called to the library immediately."

"Instantly, mum."

Eleanor came in like a brilliant flower, gushing with the family gush. "*Dear* auntie!" she said, and was lost in the conventional embrace.

"Are you striving, my darling?" said the great-aunt.

"Yes," replied the beautiful one, with her saint-like largeness of vision—as striving she certainly was, in more ways than one.

"*Dear* child," said the lady, now with her first accents of content. "Will you read this little booklet which I have brought to you, Eleanor?"

"Very carefully, auntie," replied the approved one, tenderly receiving it.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Watson! will you give these among the servants, reserving one for yourself?"

"Certainly, mum. Thank you, indeed, mum. Very interesting literature in appearance, mum."

"And will you particularly have Mary Ann sent up to me a moment, Watson?"

"Certainly, mum. She nades it, mum."

Mary Ann, dubious but stout, marched in with an enviable wealth of color, fingering her apron.

"Mary Ann, will you promise me to read this little booklet?"

"Yis, mum, if the words is aisly, I'll do it for ye with pleasure!" said Mary Ann, with a belligerent cast of her eye towards Watson.

"And appropriate it to yourself?"

"Do what, if you pl'ase, mum?"

"Let its precepts sink into your heart?"

"I will that!" recklessly affirmed Mary Ann, anxious to comport herself creditably, but, above all, to get out of the room.

"You may go, then."

"Laura," said she, turning at last to our very hostess herself, "do you still have the dangerous cup on your table?"

"Just a little Sauterne, dear sister," said

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Madam Arundell, winningly—"as harmless as water, you know."

"Worse 'n water!" said our host. "Have it when you dine with us, 'Gusta—other times we have port and sherry and champagne. Huh!"

"Is this so, dear sister?"

Madam Arundell's calm and perfect face was a study for the psychologist. "Oh, sometimes, possibly—of a very light quality, dear Augusta."

"Tain't, neither! they're good and heavy, or we wouldn't have 'em. We get all our wines of Percival. Go to Percival to get your wines, 'Gusta, and know what you're drinkin'. Glad to see ye, 'Gusta—how d' do?—lay back and take it easy."

"Dear brother, the sacred gift of pure water alone sparkles on my board."

"Croton bugs, eh? Oh yes—I remember—used to dine with ye, you know. Lord, how we used to dread it! Laura! remember how we used to dread going to 'Gusta's to dine? Give it up, 'Gusta. Very fond of you—good woman, but gettin' too old to run long on water—flop up sudden one of these days. Glad to see ye. Stay and dine—get warmed

THE MORAL IMBECILES

up for once. How d' do? Lay back and take it easy, 'Gusta."

Tears stood in good Madam John Arundell's eyes. She took leave, clasping each of us in a fervent, almost poignant, embrace. "Do you not see," she murmured to me during this process, "how you are called, dear child, to labor in the vineyard?"

"I am almost overwhelmingly impressed with the idea," I rejoined — which she received in the most abundant faith.

"I shall soon have you with me for a private conference," she said.

CHAPTER XII

“WHAT did you mean by going and engaging yourself to a man you did not love, and *did* dislike?”

In my vehemence, I let the verbs fly.

“It was the best I could do at the time, Martha: Before this, something has happened always to get me so nicely out of things.”

She looked sadly forsaken of a Providence in whom she had placed such noble trust.

“Well, the thing to do now is to go to your grandmother and to Mr. Price at once, like a woman, and tell them you entered into the engagement heedlessly and very wrongly; ask him to forgive you—he has, indeed, something to forgive—and say that you cannot and will not fulfil it.”

“But he told grandmamma, if I was ‘silly’ (he called it) he would sue for breach of promise! Imagine it, in *our* family!” she

THE MORAL IMBECILES

gasped. "We would rather both die. I would even rather marry him. Can you imagine how a man, even though he is not a gentleman, could be so exacting?"

With that face before me I could imagine how a man, even though he was not a gentleman, might be very exacting indeed in holding to the pledge of its possession.

"No," she said; "you must think of some other way, Martha."

"And do you think that possibly this may be any lesson to you in determining your future conduct?"

"It has already. I am going to break with Doctor Latimer. If I could not possibly find any other way, I promised that he should run away with me. He is so devoted to us, I am sure grandmamma would forgive him. I think he is as disgusting as Mr. Price, only, you will admit, he has cleaner hands, Martha. But after you came I made up my mind I would not do such a wicked thing—and I am going to leave it all with you!"

I knew that she was deplorably weak, I knew that she was naughty, I knew, in brief, that she was a moral imbecile, but the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

simple and absorbing faith of saints and martyrs had been wafted back by some process of theosophy and shone upon her high-bred countenance, and very greatly in the eyes lifted to mine.

I knew that argument or scorn were equally useless; but I was moved to gaze at her very fixedly.

Her beautiful look was not affected; it challenged the deepest scrutiny.

"And so you expect me to meddle in other people's affairs?"

"They are *my* affairs, dearest, and so they are yours. And isn't it strange how grand-papa loved you too, the very first time he saw you, and fancied you were his own?" She laughed merrily; the load was off her heart, it had been consigned to "Martha."

Meanwhile I had automatically unpacked my trunk. Not that I had assented, or had come to any decision: we have convictions, finally, which it is hopeless to attempt to analyze, and against which it is equally fruitless to rebel.

I was confirmed in this impression when Watson, with a slight preliminary knock, proceeded to hold forth outside my door.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Pardon me, mum. Mrs. Arundell is confined to her room with one of the attacks of vartigo to which she is subject. She is in bed, and the nurse she employs on such occasions is with her, mum. She was very much alarmed, but is now quite out of danger; but she sent me to ascertain if you would have the very great kindness to step down to her a moment, mum."

She looked pathetically transparent against the white pillows.

"My dear Miss Scheffer, it is a special Providence has sent you to us. Will you take these keys—Eleanor is so careless; and will you order—give your orders—order—"

"I am very little used to 'ordering,'" I said, relieving her faint breath with these words and a smile.

"On the contrary," said she, and smiled too. Her hand was shaking, and I took the keys. She held a small one apart, and she sent the nurse out of the room.

"Go," she said, "to the little drawer—the third inner drawer—at the left of my dressing-table; pull it out, please, and bring it to me."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

It was full of jewels. As she received them, that inflexible and satisfied look came over her face, as though, alas! her gods were with her. Now that she had them and saw their lustre, I saw plainly that she regretted some half-formed intention of her mind ; but, from the first, she had selected one, a diamond of exceeding beauty, curiously set. She caught its light with admiring and avaricious eyes, and still delayed her intention.

"I think I got this attack—I am very much better—from trying to write a letter—to Forrester. I tried to make him see the disgrace—disgrace. That other, I am willing to think, was a boyish folly, a playful trick merely, in our family—he was never bad. I regret—I have no one to lean on—none! But *this*—this that he is doing now—a street-car!"

A flush like fever overspread her face.

"You must not talk about it now. It will all be well."

I straightened the pillows and lifted her a little.

I was amazed to see the covetous eyes lifted from the jewels, with two great tears

THE MORAL IMBECILES

in them. She caught my hand. "I wish some one—who could have influence with Forrester—would try to save him. This—was his mother's ring. She was not—as happy—as might have been—perhaps. I have wondered—sometimes—if—Some time, Miss Scheffer, I shall have one of those attacks, and not recover so readily!" Her lip quivered. "I have a fancy—you will not refuse an old woman?" She had lifted the ring and was placing it on my finger.

"I cannot, Mrs. Arundell—I cannot wear this! I will do anything I can to help you in your troubles. I cannot—"

Her eyes were fixed on me with a kind of terror, wide and unnatural; a death-like pallor began to creep over her face.

"See!" I said—"I have put it on! Now hush—I will not allow another word! You are going to rest."

She sank back with a satisfied sigh. She turned with a sort of disgust from the jewels. "Put them away," she said, feebly, nor even glanced at me as I put the drawer back in its place and locked it.

"Send for me," I said, "whenever you wish me. You must rest now."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

She smiled, very naturally. "Order—dear Miss Scheffer. I am—usually—about, in a day or two. At present—I leave it all with you. Order—"

Watson made an obeisance in the hall. "Mrs. Arundell has sent out word that your bequests are to be strictly obeyed, mum. If my long experience with the tastes of the family can assist you in making out the bill of fare, I am humbly at your service, mum."

CHAPTER XIII

DOCTOR LATIMER avoided me, in what I thought rather a slinking fashion. He was engaged with Eleanor at one end of the suite of drawing-rooms, and she, I had no doubt, from her triumphant expression, was "breaking up" her incidental compact with him.

My host, with a child-like peace of countenance, was asleep and clearly snoring.

Beeman Price had taken a chair beside me. He glanced with a derisive and unpleasant expression at the couple in the stately distance.

"I understand the family's rather flung onto you, Miss Scheffer? Rather weak lot, eh?"

"Altogether too weak, I think," I said, "to take any advantage of."

He was not stupid, and he reddened through his tough skin.

"But what if you had been of great ser-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

vice to them, and only asked a business-like fulfilment of a promise, eh ?”

“ I have not been accustomed to expect that. The more service I have rendered people, the less scrupulous I have found them in the fulfilment of promises.”

He chuckled delightedly, and regarded me with some interest. “ Gad !” said he, “ you know human nature !”

“ If you think so, let me assure you Miss Arundell has no regard for the person with whom she is talking yonder ; neither—however perversely and unfortunately—has she any regard for you.”

“ Perverse ! Lord — you’ve hit it ! I should think so !”

“ As you say, the family has appealed to me in the most singular manner. I have some affairs and ambitions of my own, although it may not seem so. But you spoke of weakness ; nevertheless, I know positively that Eleanor will not fulfil the pettish and capricious engagement she made with you.”

“ She won’t, eh ?”

“ No. A child a third of your years, and a child even for her own years ! You have

THE MORAL IMBECILES

no writing from her, nor from her grandmother. You have only the 'Arundell word,' and, in this case, it will be broken. You may do your worst. I assure you they are not under any apprehension as to the result."

He surveyed me, and his usually close mouth was open. I was conscious of carrying an unperturbed smile.

Then he laughed. "D' ye think I'm an idiot, too?" said he.

"Neither that nor a villain. Your success is a matter of fame, your character unimpeached."

"She's a handsome girl. She's a fool, but she has an air! Gad! you know the air that comes along down with that sort that haven't any recollection of potato-grubbin' and wood-choppin'! Now I've done both, but I could buy them out twice over!"

"I do not doubt it."

"She's handsome, and she carries herself as if she'd took the first prize in all the tum-tum colleges in creation, and if she was good-natured I wouldn't mind her being, as I said, a born fool. But if she's going to be rabid, you don't suppose I want to marry her, do

THE MORAL IMBECILES

you? You saw that fan business the other night—fan that cost twenty dollars—smashed it on me! *That* didn't hurt—could stand that—but you can't tell with that sort what's going to happen! She's just as likely, if she got boozing mad, to throw something solid at me, eh?"

"Quite as likely," I said, and, at the sudden nature of my success, I even laughed a little, basely, at his bold pleasantry.

"Tell her she's absolved, with my compliments!" said he, looking to see if I appreciated the wit of this also, and in my relieved mood I met his conscious triumph of cynicism with another encouraging laugh.

He drew his chair nearer to me with a sudden aspect of seriousness.

"You say you have affairs and ambitions of your own, Miss Scheffer. You're a poor woman, but you may get what other people haven't the sense to appreciate—"

"Martha! Where's Martha? Watson! where's Martha?" My host awoke with a shout, bewildered.

Watson dawned on us with a benignant smile. "You have been enjoying a few mo-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ments of oblivion, sir. Miss Scheffer is in your immejate presence, sir, doing the duties of the drawing-room; Mrs. Arundell, as you will recall, sir, being prostituted tempora—”

“D—n your Bryant and ‘Thanatopsis !’ Why don’t you talk English, Watson ? Eh ? Oh !—you here, Price ? How d’ do ? Always welcome, Price. Shifted over to you, eh, Martha ? He ! he ! Trust *you* to give ’em a walking- ticket !— sharp eye—chip o’ the old block. Lots o’ tunes to Martha—won’t make much out o’ my eldest daughter, Price. He ! he !”

“Well, I’ve got to be going,” said Bee-man Price, rising, rather contemptuously. “I’ll call again,” said he, clapping his trap of a mouth at me with grawsome significance.

Eleanor rose from her retreat and came gracefully across the room, holding out her hand to him, beaming joy and a very sweet dignity as well on her face.

“Good-night, dear Mr. Price,” she said, after the fashion of her grandmother.

He gave a kind of snort, and assuredly he laughed. “Good-night, *dear* Miss Arundell !

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I've left a message for you," he added, and buttoned up his coat, with a look as though he had been spending merely an amusing hour among the wit-bereft and incompetent.

CHAPTER XIV

"MY DEAR MISS SCHEFFER,—You haven't written me since you got home.

"Please give my love and thanks to my grandmother for her letter. My grandmother talks only about reeling disgrace. I don't play a game, nor treat, nor take a treat, and I am laing up something. I lift up and down every day hundreds of babies and old folks and deformed folks and lame folks—"

"For Heaven's sake! dear Miss Scheffer," interrupted Madam Arundell, from the bed, "let us take the rest of the catalogue for granted. Pray go on to the next theme."

"If I had the abillity for the kinds of business my grandmother wants me to do, I would, but fact is I don't know how. If my grandmother won't say it's disgrace, but that it's because she wants me, I'll come home as my first duty. I leeve you to find out, and leeve it all with you anyway.

"Yours with the love of all my harte,
"FORRESTER."

"Well, what do you advise?" sighed the invalid. She had been disappointed at the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

slowness of her recovery. Twice a day Doctor Latimer attended and prescribed for her. At last I began to apply some measures of my own, and she fancied herself mending. She still clung gracefully to Doctor Latimer as an orthodox physician devoted to the family, but in the silence of her chamber she deferred entirely to me, sweetly laying the whole burden of her convalescence on my shoulders.

“What do you advise, dear Miss Scheffer?”

“I should send for him to come home. He has shown practical amendment and repentance. What is there more satisfactory than that?”

These moral imbeciles were, after all, perspicuous. It seemed to occur to her in a flash that if Forrester returned, I would take the opportunity to retreat. With returning strength she had gathered firmness, and she now put on one of the most virtuous expressions I have ever seen on mortal face.

“Practical!—ah yes, but I see no signs of the deepest feeling in this.”

“But every effort towards purity and self-control, every helpful act, is religious.”

She shook her head. “I see no evidence

THE MORAL IMBECILES

of the true spirit, dear Miss Scheffer. I think it is wise to let his self-effort continue a little longer. He may find out how frail a reed it is to lean upon! I am able to bear no excitement yet; a straw might set me back, as you know. He writes you continually that he is in excellent health. Tell him I regret his wilfulness, but watch his course with unfailing interest”—she was personified virtue. “Severe as the trial is to my affections, I think it best to let him continue a little.”

The Arundell disinterestedness of this resolve was proven some hours later when I came to her again, a letter from another source in my hand this time.

“I have a brother, Mrs. Arundell,” I said, hoping to stimulate her by an air of great cheerfulness and courage. “Now and then, when there is something of importance, he writes to me, for he is a very weighty young fellow. I have a step-mother living with him, and it seems her rheumatism is very ‘bad’—very bad, indeed. Our home is on a little farm in Vermont; we keep no servant, and at present she is not able to do the necessary house-work for herself and

THE MORAL IMBECILES

my brother. I must go and bolster them up."

I had reckoned without my host. Madam Arundell sank back pale, with an expression of great determination. She lifted her hand and touched the electric button at the side of her bed.

"Mary Ann, have Miss Arundell's maid sent down to me immediately."

Joan, the middle-aged French-woman, responded without delay.

"Joan, you remember how completely you cured your own rheumatism — severe, almost chronic—by measures known only to yourself?"

"Ya-a-s, by grasshus!" said Joan, her dark, seamed face buoyant with grateful recollection and benevolent hope.

"Miss Scheffer's step-mother is similarly afflicted. Miss Eleanor can very well manage to dress herself for a while without you, and—"

She held up a hand in majestic expostulation as I was about to speak.

"If Miss Scheffer's medical services were taken from me now I should probably go into a relapse which might prove fatal!" Her pallid lips quivered again.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Joan, you are to pack your things and go to Mrs. Scheffer's relief. Mary Ann!"

Mary Ann, always whisking a dust-cloth within ear-shot of the pivotal interest in the drama, responded, "Yis, mum."

"You are to pack your things and go with Joan to Miss Scheffer's home for some weeks. I can readily supply your place here meanwhile. You are to do faithfully *all* the domestic service there. Upon the faithfulness with which you perform those duties will depend your returning to your situation here."

"Yis, mum."

"Go, both of you, and make your preparations. Miss Scheffer will give you later the necessary instructions in regard to the journey."

Then she gasped. I put some wine to her lips. She lay a moment faintly, with closed eyes.

"I shall esteem it the barest justice, dear Miss Scheffer, to assume the domestic expenses of your household during this crisis." An expenditure to forward her own ends never afflicted Madam Arundell.

"But for you, this last prostration of mine

THE MORAL IMBECILES

might be tending to a very different result. I shall attend to it with confidence in Joan, who is strictly to be trusted. Ah! I fancied the dizziness was returning. I will rest—a moment."

Many thoughts had flown rapidly through my mind. If Joan had some mysterious panacea for my step-mother's complaint, why not let her go and apply it? Madam Arundell's illness, at least, was not affected; and, interested now in her case, I had a desperate determination to see her well again. Then, my step-mother had always disliked me, and I returned the sentiment cordially. Meditating, I sat by Madam Arundell's bedside, when Eleanor burst into the room.

"Oh, grandmamma! Joan says she is going to Martha's home, and she is packing my things too—I told her to do so!"

Madam Arundell opened her weary eyes, rather with complacency, now that the dilemma revolved outside her own personal needs.

"You told me that I might take Joan and go to Cousin Kate's in Canada for a few weeks this winter for the ice-sports, and I am going to Vermont instead!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Come over here, Eleanor,” I said; “I want to talk to you. You will find unbounded ice, no doubt, in my home in Vermont; it will even mix in the water for your bath—”

“I bathe in cold water every morning. I am going!”

“There will be no way of heating your bedroom—”

“I hate hot rooms. I am going!”

“No lounges, no theatres, no carriage, no quail on toast, no frogs’ hind-legs—”

“Eleanor,” interposed Madam Arundell, conclusively, “you forget that Miss Scheffer has a brother.”

“No, indeed, I do not, grandmamma. I am so glad there is another young person.”

“As for that, Mrs. Arundell,” said I, laughing, “Dan’s interest, when he is not laboring, is given entirely to the scientific reviews. He is a good boy, but rather sour, like myself. I doubt, when Eleanor comes away from her ice-sports (of which Dan will prove one), if he will know even the color of her eyes and hair.”

Madam Arundell smiled. Eleanor’s enthusiasm was not abated a jot.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I am going!" said she.

"Go, then, for a day, if you are determined," said Madam Arundell, wearily. "Since you have broken your engagement with poor Mr. Price, it may be well for you to learn something of the rigors of life."

Eleanor, naturally, was not afraid of penury. She went out with a bounding step.

"Write at my table, I beg of you, Miss Scheffer," said the invalid.

I wrote, with keen appreciation of the situation :

"DEAR DAN,—There will arrive to you, to-morrow night (self-sustaining), a French specialist to heal my step-parent, a maid of all work, and a beautiful damsel, no other than the daughter of the family, seeking ice scenery and winter sports. Give her the room over the sitting-room, and if your mechanical genius can devise a way of getting a little warmth into it, even though it be by knocking a hole through the floor, do so.

"Mrs. Arundell is still precariously weak, and I have decided to remain here a little longer.

"MARTHA."

CHAPTER XV

DAN went, in his stolid, matter-of-fact way, to the “station,” which, by-the-way, resembled a cow-shed.

He had a sleigh fully equal to the occasion in the generous extent of its plank-flooring, if otherwise devoid of elegance, and he carried and piled on the trunks unaided—the station-master being sickly. There was one primitive seat in front.

“Come,” said he, to the eldest woman—to Joan—“you sit here.”

“Mees! mees!” said Joan, greatly smiling, and pointing, in the moonlight, at Eleanor.

“No, Joan,” said that gracious individual, “sit just where Daniel tells you.” His manipulation of the trunks had confused him in her mind somewhat with the offices of a porter; so she said “Daniel,” but he was her Martha’s brother, and his manner was anything but servile, and she smiled divinely.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

And now I have to record of my brother Daniel the last thing that should have been expected of him in reason or in nature—a sudden thwarting of the logical principles of life, which admits of no explanation and remains merely to be stated—as he gazed at the moral imbecile, he *blushed with delight*, and wavered, as if longing, after all, to place her on the seat beside him!

But the obedient Joan was already ensconcing herself there. “Wa—al,” said this anglicized Frenchwoman, and added, with naïve inelegance, “I have in me the joke to bust!”

“Now you two I am going to put in here on the trunks,” said Daniel; and, still deferring conscientiously to the precedence of years, he lifted Mary Ann’s stout form and set her among the boxes; he took up the costly fur-robed form of Miss Katherine Eleanor Arundell and put her down beside the maid, on the latter’s flat box. “Put your feet deep in the straw, lean against those big trunks, get close together—there!” Mary Ann had on the frail ray of a bonnet in which she went to city mass. “You do not need that scarf, flying out under your

THE MORAL IMBECILES

cloak," said Dan to Miss Arundell; "you are in fur from head to foot; let *her* have it to wrap her head and neck in—she will realize what this wind means pretty soon!"

Eleanor delivered up the scarf on the instant, with the sweetest good-nature.

Dan, going to the other extreme of the sled, took off his own silk neckerchief—his pet article of furniture—and turned up his coat-collar. "Tie this over your head," said he to Joan.

Joan, struck with amazement at her superior and coquettish situation, only grinned broadly at him.

He took off his mittens, and himself adjusted the scarf to her needs, leaving, with masculine tact, a broad end flapping at each of her ears. Miss Arundell and Mary Ann peeped over from among the boxes, and were edified without distinction of class.

"Don't talk to me!" said Mary Ann, through hilarious though frozen tears. "Would I be getting tickets to the the-a-ter? The the-a-ters don't get the likes o' what I see, day by day, God knows! Take back yer scarf, Miss Eleanor. I wouldn't have taken it only he was so sojerly."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"No, no—I wish I had thought of it myself. His eyes are like his sister's, Mary Ann."

"Maybe. But I'd never think such a scrawn as her 'u'd have such a roustin' big biy for a brother. But he has the gall on him, too, d'ye mind?"

"You are not to talk to me in that way, Mary Ann."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Eleanor. Don't move off and let the wind blow between us!"

Eleanor, realizing the potency of this advice, cuddled up again to her companion, and, after the manner of the mature Arundells, fell asleep. Mary Ann put a kind and sheltering arm around her, and, being now practically alone in a landscape of snow, she comforted herself a little with philosophy and that song of hers which was its mysterious exponent :

"The old man says to his wife, says he,
Says he and says I,
And says I and says he—"

Joan did not hear, to mock, the flapping appendages at her ears constituting an en-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

grossing avenue of sound; but the latter saw at last a light in the wild waste.

"We arrive?" she said, eagerly.

Dan nodded. "We arrive!" cried Joan, shrilly, backward to the baggage.

My step-mother, it is to be said (another thwarting of all rational inferences) took an immediate fancy to Joan, but especially to that pronounced moral imbecile, Miss Arundell, who, on warming herself, went at once to the bedside and folded Mrs. Scheffer in an embrace of unquestioning affection.

"I do not know what Dan has got for your supper, I'm sure," said the invalid, flushing to the roots of her hair, which, by-the-way, was always red. "I tried to have him come to me for advice, but he goes his own way; his sister and him both will go their own way."

"They are very spunky," said the faithless Eleanor.

"Ya-as, var' spunk," said the facile and heathen Joan.

Considerable clatter arose from the kitchen, to whose exigencies Dan was introducing Mary Ann; they were both hale beings, with no natural sentiments of noiseless-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ness, and the table was being set with a will.

Soon a cow-bell, the only medium on which the apt Mary Ann could lay her hand, was heard resounding up the stairway, and the daughter of the house of Arundell descended.

Daniel, meanwhile, had struggled with that first poignant arrow of delight and torn it from his breast. Wholly? For, after bringing in the boxes and putting up his horse, he had gone up to his little cold bedroom and put on the suit of black broad-cloth, in which, by reason of his strength, he acted as chief bearer at funerals.

"I tried to have her put seats for four," gravely said this benighted Vermont countryman; "they must be very hungry, too. But she did not."

"Why, no—" said Miss Arundell, smiling, but very gently; "however hungry they are, of course we could not eat with the servants. They will not in the least mind waiting till afterwards."

Daniel stretched out his great arms in their thin broadcloth and asked a blessing in his accustomed way; the moral imbecile

THE MORAL IMBECILES

openly regarding him during this rite with graceful and complacent interest. The stove and general culinary department of preparation were at one end of the dining-room, or, rather, the dining-room was at one end of those; and Mary Ann, standing buoyant and silent during the blessing, now swung her ladle and proceeded to dip from the caldron of miscellaneous nourishment which Daniel had prepared and left simmering on the stove during his absence.

Having put some of this, with the hot plates, on the table, she retreated into the cold pantry, leaving the door a little ajar; for Mary Ann designed not to miss any of life's play as it evolved in ceaseless panorama before her.

"There!" said Daniel, growing hot—"we haven't any bread. I got out, you see, and I do not understand making it."

"I do not like bread," said the ready one; and being a lady of great tact, she began to speak of some of her own difficulties and sorrows in life, in her gentle way.

Daniel had never seen anything so proud and yet so sweet as the moral imbecile, sitting there pouring out his tea.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"And what a delicious stew!" she added.
"I am sure it must be something very choice
to have such a strange flavor."

"It is a rabbit stew," said Daniel.

"And this is its dear little tail, I am sure,"
said Eleanor, eying something on her plate
with childlike pleasure and admiration.

"No," said Daniel, wishing bitterly that
he had remembered to slice the vegetables—
"that is only a carrot sprout."

Mary Ann retreated to the farthest corner
of the pantry and sang, gazing at the frozen
window:

"The old man says to his wife, says he,
Says he and says I,
And says I and says he—"

After supper, Daniel went stoutly and
gravely into his workshop, at one end of
the sitting-room; it was full of straps,
screws, wheels, and general contrivances.

Miss Arundell sat down by the fire, alone.

Daniel loved his work and became ab-
sorbed in it. But he glanced out after a while
and saw the beautiful, listless figure, sitting
patiently in the glow of the firelight.

"Would you like to read?" said he, and
thoughtfully brought out to her the lightest

THE MORAL IMBECILES

and spiciest volume of literature he possessed—*Our Country's Thousand Most Remarkable Events*.

“Thank you!” said Miss Arundell. He looked out again. The book was open in her lap, but she preserved her former attitude, unenlivened.

“I made a way of heating your room,” said Daniel, “and I hope you won’t find it uncomfortable when you unpack your things in it.”

“Oh, Joan always unpacks my things,” drawled Eleanor, smiling, though weary.

Dan turned to his straps, with a fairy-tale in his head. Oh, false human nature! If he had ever thought of uniting another’s lot to his own, it should be some serious, helpful worker in life’s struggles—and now! the poor country boor saw but one entralling ideal of womanhood; that or none for him, forever; and hopeless as sweet.

“Martha says you invent things, Daniel,” said she, his ill-fitting funeral cloth impressing her still further with the remoteness of his social position.

“Yes, I do. You would not understand, but I’ve got an idea here that I shall make

THE MORAL IMBECILES

practical, just as sure as daylight. And when I do—I may have a penny! It's no chimera, either."

Eleanor's eyes were fixed on him with wide interest now, his gloomy face had turned so animated and handsome.

"You see," he went on—he who had never committed himself to mortal before. Eleanor went over to the workshop door. "The old way was—so and so—" he explained, eagerly. Eleanor entered. "But now—you would not understand, of course, but I am working on this line—now—so—and so." Eleanor sat down on a tool-box, attentively.

Mary Ann peeped in, and went up the stairs, singing.

"Ce! ce!" and "Ci! ci!" sneered Joan, intercepting her. "You have the tune, Mar'an! Is mam'selle 'appy below?"

"She's settin' in the hide and l'ather shop with the young farmer. They looks to be enjoyin' theirselves," replied Mary Ann, coolly, and continued her refrain.

Joan went down. "Shall I go with mam'selle to her apartment, and assist her to retire?" she inquired, in French.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Eleanor, always ready to sleep, held out her hand in a gracious "Good-night" to Daniel. The poor wretch worked late at his design, sneezing obliviously in his thin coat—not bewildered, but resolute, though false and lost to common-sense.

Oh, the delicious dream to his fallen though toiling and masterful nature of a possession like that—beautiful and vigorously grown to woman's estate, and yet actually requiring a nurse to put her to bed!

CHAPTER XVI

THERE was one simple piece of mechanism which Daniel Scheffer executed without delay. He put another seat on his sled.

"Would you like to ride down to the village and the post-office with me?" he said to Eleanor, the day after her arrival.

"Oh yes; and if Joan is engaged with Mrs. Scheffer, Mary Ann can go."

Finding it an accepted fact that she was not to go without an aproned attendant, and determined to begin his courting right away, in true Vermont fashion, and to have his bride and his patent marching on in the same line of completion, Daniel therefore went out straightway and put another seat to his sled, and he put it at a most remarkable distance from the front one.

"Behol' Mar'an! she rides behin'!" said Joan, in ecstasy, at the window—she herself having been notably chosen to sit beside the young man the night before. "She

THE MORAL IMBECILES

attracts not monsieur—no! He despise and put her afar off."

"It is a wonder he did not put them both there," said my step-mother.

"He have not the heart to love?—not one entrancing as my mees?" said Joan, with a sudden spur of conscientious anxiety.

"You need not be anyways put out," said Mrs. Scheffer, dryly. "He loves his workshop and his reading, and that is all. The Scheffers are queer, and, some think, hard."

"Would you like to drive the colt?" said Daniel, indulgently, to his companion, and found it was one thing she could do completely. "You are sure you are quite warm? And so you *do* like our winter scenery? Let me sit over on the windy side; it will make a great deal of difference, you will find. I am not easily blown through." He moved a little sideward, inward, further to protect his seatmate.

"The old man says to his wife, says he," murmured Mary Ann, in almost inaudible song, from her lonely retreat.

"There is a conference at the village this afternoon. Would you like to go?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“A coasting ‘conference’?”

“N-no—a church conference. The ministers, and perhaps some of the laymen, will discuss certain themes, and there will be a collation, roast turkey, etc.”

“It must be charming. We will go, certainly.”

“Drive down the hill, please, and I will leave the corn.”

Daniel, with simple dignity, extracted two bags of corn from the extreme rear of his caravan, and deposited them at the mill. The colt pranced and shied at the noise. Eleanor quieted him with a loving and practised hand. Daniel Scheffer glowed with delight:

“I would trust you anywhere with the colt. You drive better than I can. You are so firm and patient with him. I think you must have had some trials, Miss Arundell, to make you so patient.”

“Yes, Daniel,” sighed the moral imbecile, with perfect condescension, “I have had some very deep trials.”

He turned his broad shoulders still further inward as they climbed up again to the breezy heights. No wind should ever again strike her if he could help it.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"The old man says to his wife, says he,"

dimly moaned Mary Ann, more desolate than ever, now that the meal-bags were gone from her vicinity.

Daniel accomplished his errands in the village, and brought up at the horse-sheds by the bleak church.

Eleanor had dressed in the morning for a day of "ice-sports," in a picturesque shooting-costume. She had thrown on for the drive a great fur-lined opera-cloak, grave of color and very long: but on entering the warm church, Mary Ann took the cloak over her arm, and Eleanor stepped forth with a theatrical effect of which she, herself, was wholly unconscious.

"She is a friend of my sister, from New York, with her—servant," explained Daniel to the scandalized matrons at the collation-board. "She came for the winter sports, and she did not know we were to stop at the church."

"Well, if she's come all the way from New York to slide down-hill, I think she'd better brought a flannel petticoat and a dress-skirt," said one.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Daniel did not hear. "I am sure you will make her feel at home," he said.

"She don't look timid."

"She certainly don't look bold," came from a kindly heart, carrying off, too, more attempt at external style than the others; "them golf-suits are all the rage. I'll go and say 'how d' do.' "

The afternoon session was about to begin. Daniel gulped down some coffee and biscuits, and took his place in the pews. Eleanor and Mary Ann, by force of circumstances, sat down *together* at the long table, which was spread near the stoves in the rear of the audience room.

"Will we be 'atin' while they be's discoursin,' Miss Eleanor?" whispered Mary Ann.

"Certainly. It is the way to do at 'collations' if you are late," said Eleanor, with assumed erudition on that score. "They begged me to help myself. You see the rest have finished, but look at the whole turkeys and cranberry-sauce and things left, Mary Ann. We must be very still. I think we would better get the things we wish together first, they are scattered so. You see that chocolate-cake away over at the end?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Mary Ann rose in the midst of the invocation and cautiously tip-toed over to it, returning stealthily with her prize.

"And see that exquisite-looking pumpkin-pie, away over *there*, Mary Ann."

Mary Ann had on a large white apron and one of my step-mother's knitted hoods, which she allowed to hang by the strings down her back, the stoves being very warm. Like a thief in the night, she slunk over and returned with the pumpkin-pie.

They ate slowly, deliberately, with excessive quietness; but they ate, through hymn and through address, Mary Ann occasionally making an adroit foraging tour, with a grievously guilty air, on tiptoe.

Many wondering, sidelong glances were cast back at them. Daniel was scarlet, but adoringly true to his lady love.

"Let us hear from Scheffer. The laymen have a word to say here. Scheffer!" was called.

Eleanor paused in the dissection of a turkey's wing, and looked up.

Daniel stepped immediately to the platform and stood there like a lion, head and shoulders above them all, dark and massive.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

And the words that poured out of him, with self-possessed fluency! ready and scholarly English, and with a fitness to the occasion which neither Eleanor nor Mary Ann lingered to appreciate, amazed at his attitude.

"Well, now, he has the eddication on him," gasped Mary Ann. "He's equal to thim Chinamen in N' York. D'y'e mind the eddication they must have to be writin' the way they do?"

"He is not like a Chinaman at all," said Eleanor. "I thought he was just a farmer. Forrester was at college, but he could not begin to address people like that, nor anything but slang—the darling! But Mr. Scheffer is eloquent. I have heard very distinguished speakers, Mary Ann." They had discontinued their lazy and elaborate meal for no other address, and it was during the thesis of another speaker that the two resumed eating and finally drew their chairs back with respectful quiet, side by side, almost instantly relapsing into the serenity of sleep. The wintry dusk fell and the kerosene lamps were set alight.

"Did you enjoy it?" said Daniel, as they set out homeward, with the colt.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I think your conferences and collations are simply delightful, Mr. Scheffer," said Eleanor.

Mr. Scheffer! At first, his face fell; then, as if at some new touch of dignity and withdrawal in her manner, he became more elate than before.

"I must bring down some of that wood to-morrow," he remarked, as they passed a pile on one of the heights of his wild domain.

"Why don't ye take along a bit now, sorr?" said Mary Ann, who had been brooding, in her retreat, over reminiscences of her own, of an extremely rough and simple manner of living—"I'm sure the slid can contain it!"

"Yes," cried Eleanor, gleefully, "in the moonlight! Come on!" and she sprang down, in hunting-cloth and gaiters.

Katherine Eleanor Arundell and Mary Ann Lynch carried rails to the sled between them, and Daniel carried alone. Refreshed from their collation and their nap, they worked jubilantly. Daniel thought the sun of life and joy had risen over Haskell, Vermont. He wrenched up his patent seats, and the wood was piled high.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

He spread blankets for Eleanor on top of the load, and one for Mary Ann at the scheduled distance. He wisely sat very near Miss Arundell, on the precarious summit, to protect her from possible harm.

“The old man says to his wife, says he,
Says he and says I,
And says I and says he,”

sang Mary Ann, boldly now, and with unshackled philosophy, in the far background.

The cottage was uncommonly alight, and there were horses tied here and there in sheltered places about the premises.

“It’s a surprise party!” groaned Daniel.

“Oh,” exclaimed Eleanor, with delight, “New York—New York is *nothing* to Haskell, Vermont—and oh, look at Joan!”

Joan was standing, wild and dishevelled, in the doorway. “I resist, but they enter!” she explained; “they rush in! they romp! they drink of cider, they eat of apple and corn that is pop!”

“It’s all right, Joan,” laughed Daniel. The rioters come pouring out, young men and maidens; they helped unload the wood,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

they put up the horse and brought hay and water.

The moonlight was pouring like day, in at the barn door.

"Let's play 'scape kiss,' three times round the outside of the barn," suggested one.

Some modest young ladies sniffed and stood back, but the more hilarious of the party prepared to run.

"Cousin Tom couldn't play, of course," said the same reckless first speaker; "he's preparin' for the ministry."

Tom, smiling, in a long, black coat, stepped forth, at this taunt, ready for the race.

"One—two—three—if you get caught before the third time round, you get kissed. One—two—three—go!" said a referee.

Eleanor, in athletic gaiters—all alive with the merry scene and the crisp air, suddenly threw her cloak at Mary Ann, and was off.

The handsome student, in clerical coat, singled her out and made that way. Daniel burst into the race; the student had the first start. Eleanor was nearly safe, racing in the second circuit, but the student was fleet of foot. Daniel made a mighty spurt and passed him; he caught Eleanor just be-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

fore her flying feet were entering safe on the third run. He did not kiss her. "I don't want you to play this any more," he said, gravely, and seemed trembling.

"Oh, indeed! — why not?" said Eleanor, lifting her hand with a beautiful motion, breathless, and laughing, to fasten her hair. "Certainly I shall play if I like — it's the merest nonsense."

"Well, I can run faster than any man in Haskell," said Daniel, gloomily, "and I shall run after you, and the next time I catch you — according to the rules of the game—I must kiss you."

Eleanor turned her back on him and went into the house. The genial student appeared. "I will pop you some fresh corn, Miss Arundell," said he; "this surprise-party is in your honor—did you know?"

He put some corn and butter in a spider and whirled it on the red-hot stove. He was a dapper little fellow, with an innocent brow, and companionable, very.

He and Eleanor sat on the wood-box, with a milk-pan full of popcorn between them, and they were exceeding merry.

But when the last sleigh-bell of the sur-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

prise-party had jingled away in the distance, Eleanor still turned her back with dignity towards Daniel Scheffer, and sat down at the remotest possible distance from him and his workshop, to write a letter.

"**MY OWN DEAREST MARTHA**.—I never was so well in my life. The senery is magnifisent. I love to look at the distant snow-covered mountain peeks—"

"I hope I did not offend you, Miss Arundell," said a deep, sad voice behind her.

Eleanor bent lower, brilliant, and wrote again, in poetic repetition, "the distant mountain peeks."

"Won't you forgive me?"

"Would you have been—insolent, if you had caught me?"

"I did catch you, and I was not insolent."

"But would you, another time?"

"No."

"Not any number of times?"

"No. If you wished to run 'round the barn—and there were no others following, to annoy you—you may be sure you should suffer no insolence from me."

"I will try to forgive you, if I can, Mr. Scheffer, but you grieved me very deeply.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Good-night!" She held out her hand with a sad and sweet gentleness.

"Yes, Joan. You may sit down until I have finished my letter.

"The distant mountain peaks" [she reviewed briefly, and added] "are beautiful. Mrs. Scheffer is already improving, but slowly, and we may remane some time. Joan is faithful as ever. Mary Ann is extremly useful. Do write me about precious Forrester. We cannot all have quallities like you and Mr. Scheffer. How dilagent he is! We do not get on very well, but I came for the senery."

CHAPTER XVII

THUS I received with satisfaction the natural confirmation of my foregone conclusions.

"Well, if she is well and happy and so innocently entertained, why not let the dear child remain?" said Madam Arundell, as it were with a glow of affection. "And now, Miss Scheffer, as to President Thorne's note, there is a distressing number of those poor colleges, but he is related, distantly, to some of our best families, and the list of donors is noteworthy. Please read the names again."

I did so. She listened with simple reverence. "Our name," she said, blushing with pleasure, and pointing at the head of the list, "invariably stands among those. When he calls, dear Miss Scheffer, may I beg of you to take down my check to him, regretting my inability to see him, and will you invite him cordially to luncheon? The poor man

THE MORAL IMBECILES

has excellent sense and will not trouble you by accepting."

"Very well."

"And—you see how I lean on your kindness—it is an important day at the Wood-side Hospital, of which, you know, I am one of the directors. A vote is to be taken as to whether a less expensive quality of meat is to be substituted. I have no doubt that the more economical pieces of meat furnish fully as much nourishment as those we are accustomed to supply for our own tables. It is already known that I give you the authority. Will you go and discuss and vote upon this matter for me—in fact, far more cleverly than I could do—ordering the carriage at two?"

"With pleasure," I rejoined, brazenly determining that the full influence of my vicarious vote should go towards the continuance of superior meats.

Watson knocked, and spoke, standing outside the door:

"The laundress's sister has sent a despatch for her, mum, as one of her children is dying with croup, mum. I left her weeping, mum."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Madam Arundell sighed, quite impatiently. "Well, tell her to return as soon as possible. With the funeral and all, it will probably occupy three days, Watson?"

"Presumably, mum."

"Well?"

"She requests to know if you will kindly reimburse her with her wages to date, mum?"

"Oh, of course," said the lady, indifferently. "My dear Miss Scheffer, will you look in my book of household expenses? Maggie Cruise—how much to date? Four dollars and a half? My purse—thank you! How provoking! I have nothing under a five."

"I have fifty cents in my pocket, mum," came the stately obsequious old voice, outside the door—"which, if Miss Scheffer will receive and kindly convey to you, mum, will relieve the occasion of its present embarrassment, mum, and I will take the five-dollar note to Maggie, without delay."

"Very well, and be sure she pays you back the fifty cents, Watson. Correctness in business is a duty—a duty, Watson."

"I attend, mum. I have another communication to make to you, mum, as soon as I have despatched the matter in hand."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Madam Arundell waited, uneasily.

Watson returned. "Mr. Arundell's man was reading the paper to him this morning, mum, and he would have him turn to the play notices, and picked out the 'The School for Scandal' (now reviving in New York, as you know, mum), and sent him down immejately to purchase a box, mum."

Mrs. Arundell sighed again, and fretfully.

"His man, thinking, mum, that he would have forgotten it as usual, by the time he returned, simply took a little stroll, mum, and came back."

"Well?"

"Mr. Arundell said to him, 'Have you secured the box?' The man was *in extramis*, so to speak. On his replying in the negative, Mr. Arundell—to be braf—pitched into him, mum, and even threw a variety of projectiles at him, mum, and sent him out again. This time, the man went down and secured the box, mum, and Mr. Arundell is dwelling on the anticipation with pleasure, mum."

"He is the only one who can do so, I am sure," said madam, bitterly. "What shall we do?" she added, turning to me, with a face of grievous despair. "I need not sug-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

gest to you how positively unfit my poor husband is to attend the theater."

"I think he will behave very well," I observed, hopefully.

"He is confident that Miss Scheffer will do him the honor to accompany him," interpolated the patient Watson, behind the door.

"Could your—could your magnanimity extend so far, dear Miss Scheffer? You alone have any possible power to save the occasion from disaster. Of course you must take a maid; his man must go, and Watson."

"Thus reinforced, I am sure we shall prove a very discreet party of revellers," I returned.

"He may forget it," she groaned, with faint hope.

"I think, in this instance, mum, his memory is likely to prove retentive, mum."

"Very well, Watson. You may go."

My host's memory proved retentive in an eminent degree. Having, among other vicissitudes of the day, handed Madam Arundell's check to the poor college president, who, by the way, perhaps owing to some

THE MORAL IMBECILES

fault of manner on my part, accepted the invitation to luncheon and availed himself heartily of its privileges, and having unhesitatingly cast my vote for the best sirloin-steaks at the hospital, I took my place in the carriage, that evening, beside the most pure-hearted exquisite old dandy existent in the city.

“Do I appear well, Martha? You are not ashamed of me? I haven’t been very social about town since you went away. Now you are home again, we must make up for lost time, my daughter—we must make up for lost time. Watson!”

“Yes, sir!” replied that much-enduring individual, sitting stiffly away from the bouncing maid at his side. The valet was beside the coachman, on the box. “I attend, sir.”

“Well, well, Watson, cheer up! Put your diploma from the theological seminary in your pocket. The funeral’s over, and we’re out on a lark, old fellow—he! he!—going to the play again, Watson—going to the play!”

“Unquestionably, sir.”

“D—n your canticles unabridged, Watson. Well, well, we’re growing old togeth-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

er, old boy. *You'll* never be thrown on the world, Watson—I'll look out for that. Martha!" he added, distinctly, "who is this person sitting opposite me?"

"A new maid."

"Oh! eh? Ah!—very well, very well. Why the deuce are we taking a whole dray-load of domestics to the play, Martha?"

"It is the proper thing to do, now. It is a mere fad."

"Makes the air very close, Martha. Where's old nurse Rose? Following along somewhere with my penny whistle and tin soldiers, I suppose?"

"She has pledged herself never to attend the theatre, and is morally debarred from doing so."

"Fiddlesticks! Did you ever see such a houseful of picked and qualified old fools, Martha? Where's my little Nell?"

"She is away in the country for recreation."

"Ah—who let her go?"

"I did."

"It's all right, Martha—perfectly satisfied—leave everything with you, Martha—Here we are! Wake up, Watson! Still at-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

tending the funeral, I see. Keep well behind there, young woman! Strut along behind there, Solibeg! I'm not going to be seen going into the theatre with a whole cabbage-garden! Come, Martha! Come, my child, keep close to me!"

We sat sumptuously and conspicuously in the box, at the right of the stage, our retinue in the rear; and the form of my old beau shone out, polished and handsome, in the gaslight.

Whether prompted to attendance by Mrs. Arundell, as a further safeguard to us, I discovered Beeman Price in an orchestra-chair near by, wearing a lively expression of cynicism.

From the opposite box, two superbly well-groomed old gentlemen, dandies of a perfect era, like my own escort, rose and came over to us. My host and they were exultant as three cherubic boys at meeting one another again under such delightful auspices. Their bows, their smiles, their waved and scented locks were charming to contemplate.

"Ned! Jim!" said my host, pressing a hand of either of these spotless and courtly millionaires, "let me introduce you to my

THE MORAL IMBECILES

grandson's wife, Mrs. Arundell—Mrs. Forrest-er Arundell. We are likely to keep up the family prestige, eh?—he! he!—yes. Mrs. Arundell—Mrs. Forrester Arundell!" he repeated, with sublime precision.

The two bowed impressively. I felt that Beeman Price had also come to the box and was witnessing this scene in the silent back-ground. At all events, all that he could dis-cover on my face was an indifferent smile. To thwart my host's hallucinations in our present position would have been simply to eclipse the stage in tragic or melodramatic action.

"We shall have the honor of calling upon you without delay," said one, indicating the intentions of his family towards me, with another bow. "We shall have the very great pleasure of calling upon you without delay," said the other, similarly bending low, and they departed to their own box.

Beeman Price drew up a chair behind my own.

"Do you want me to go over and explain your 'grandfather-in-law's' fiasco to those superannuated old dudes?" he whispered in my ear.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"As you please," I replied, and looked, without concern, to the stage.

"You ought to been a man," chuckled he. "You'd bluff the whole lot of us. You're acting sensible, though. I admire ye, egad! It's always sensible to keep your head. They all know poor Arundell. Ye acted like the top-crust o' quality, and sensible too—egad! And, according to your own tell, ye're only a poor woman in the working-classes."

"And never more so than during this present stage of my existence."

He laughed delightedly. "I can tell ye one thing," he whispered, "and I've made up my mind to say it. It's optional with you whether you go back to work, or stay in that mare's-nest up at Arundell's, either one. There's another course before ye—and mighty welcome—if ye'll take it. You know what I mean. Will ye think it over? Say, will ye think it over?"

"I should never please you. I am extravagant."

"No!"

"I am excessively extravagant. I am a spendthrift."

"You are chaffing."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Ah, if I only were! Given your wealth at my disposal—and I should never marry you unless you put your wealth at my disposal—I should give away at a speedier rate even than you could accumulate. I have many schemes of that sort in my head. It only needs the means to carry them out.”

“It’s a propensity, then, a woman of your sense might overcome.”

“It is something deeper than that. It is a taint or failing in the very fibre of my being. Always and fatally, I have allowed my plans to be thwarted by some weak yielding to the pitiful disturbances in the air about me. Conscious, if you will, of being strong and able to sail alone, I have never been anything but a tug for drifting boats: no straight course, no sure haven, nothing but this desperate struggle to keep off the immediate rocks.”

“Come,” he whispered, impatiently, “talk sense. I’ve—I’ve got love enough for ye, too. Will you marry me?”

“Will you sign over your property to me, just keeping enough for your own simple needs?”

“Lord!—there’s always got to be a screw loose in a woman’s head somewhere!”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“In *all* heads, it is said.”

“There ain’t one of you but can torment a man. Will you think it over, then, some time when you are not chaffing?”

“Alas! I shall be ‘chaffing’ till the winding-sheet covers me. You may make up your mind to that. I was born so.”

“Martha!” exclaimed my host, discontentedly, aloud, as the curtain rose on the second act—“I’m sick of this—let’s go home! The actors are dead, Martha—the old boys and girls are dead. I see. Well, well—very pretty acting—very much obliged; but let’s wake up our cabbage garden back here, and get out! Come, Martha—come!”

This was uttered in so plaintive and heart-broken a tone, no one within the range of hearing could have felt scandalized. Beeman Price accompanied us to the carriage door.

“We’re full here, Price, sorry to say,” said my host—“very close, as it is. Next time, goin’ to charter an omnibus and take the scullery-maids and footboy—show just fit for ‘em! Won’t make much out o’ Martha, Price—he! he!—lots o’ tunes to Martha. Always glad to see ye, Price—always welcome. Tell the man to drive on!

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Old boys and girls dead. *There was acting!* Well, well—very pretty play. You look quite chirked-up, Watson. Need a little recreation, all of us. Give us some poetry, Watson."

"Yes, sir. Life's a play, and all the men and women merely actors. They have their intrances and extrances—"

"That 'll do! Very good—very fine, indeed, Watson. D——d trite, though! Distressingly trite!" My host sighed, and fell asleep.

"You are home early," said Madam Arundell, pale and with set lips; "tell me the worst."

"There was no worst. Our conduct was admirable. We simply tired of the play."

"If you leave me," said she, letting one of those unfamiliar tears start to her eyes, "I shall die. I have forgotten to ask you," she added—"how did you get on with poor President Thorne?"

"He expressed unbounded thanks towards you, and deeply appreciated the luncheon as well."

"He stayed for luncheon! Dear me—the poor man must have been positively hungry! And about the hospital?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I spoke at some length, and voted for the best steaks for the patients."

"You thought it wise?" she murmured, feebly, but without hardness.

"I have been employed in such places, you know, and have had some practical experience. I thought it wise."

"Very well, dear Miss Scheffer—thank you! Will you—can you read to me just a little, as usual?—the good book—yes. Your voice comforts me. I have been quite unstrung."

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. JOHN ARUNDELL's empty carriage appeared at the door next morning. The footman descended and delivered a note :

"Will dear Miss Scheffer kindly come to me, at her convenience ? The carriage will wait."

With that extreme pliancy which only the desperately wilful can command, I informed Madam Arundell of my errand and prepared to go.

"I think it is very inconsiderate of Augusta, to say the least, to send for you this morning, when I am feeling almost a premonition of another attack," said madam, with considerable healthy spite. "She probably only wishes you for the purpose of delivering one of her lectures."

"Better 'n having her come here, Laura," chuckled my host—for we were all of a physical condition, now, to be ensconced together in the library for a time. "Martha 'll talk up to her. Lots o' tunes to Martha."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I went with no aggressive spirit, however, and I was touched to see Mrs. John Arundell's kind old face actually peering out for me, and that anxiously, at a window.

"Something has really occurred among the moral imbeciles," I thought.

The rooms were spacious as those I had left, and much colder, as though the more bracing quality of grandaunt Augusta's nature had diffused itself in the general atmosphere.

"Come to my private room, dear," she said, with a somewhat nervous haste, and seated me. "Lettice!" she called to her maid, "bring Miss Scheffer a fan. I am sure, dear Miss Scheffer, you wish a fan." I accepted this corollary of polite existence with rather numb fingers.

"We Americans keep our houses too warm," she murmured; "we have lost healthful vigor of constitution. I have brought up my own family more ruggedly and — abstemiously."

"They are all still with you?"

"No, dear—no. Four of my beloved ones are at rest. The other four are long since flown from the home-nest."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

The home-nest seemed to me at present like a very exposed heritage on the bough of a chill-tree. But I knew that Mrs. John Arundell was tenderly good.

"I hear," she said, "dear, dear child—I hear that you went with my poor afflicted brother to the play last night?"

"Yes, I summoned up the fortitude to do so."

"But—bear with me, dear child; I am already warmly attached to you—what if you had spent those precious hours in trying to bring him into the fold?"

"I think he is there already; and, for that part, his kind impulses often shame me."

"Alas, no—he has never yet been folded with us!—I hear that he introduced some people to you as my grandnephew Forrester's wife."

"He did so, but without doubt the poor man's condition of mind is fully known to his acquaintances."

"Alas! I fear that these particular individuals are nearly as daft as he. The wildness of youth bears thorns, my child."

"In that case, the misstatement of an-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

other unsound mind would probably make little impression upon theirs."

"I dare say it has already escaped from the unholy throng that perturb their diseased memory. But this is not to the point. I hear that my poor dear grandnephew writes to you, and you alone?"

"Yes, he persists in doing so."

"Does this—oh, my dear—does this suggest to you no opportunity of bringing *him* into the fold?"

"I consider him already there. He is overcoming the old life. He is striving bravely."

"But the first step?"

"He is nobly taking it."

"Alas! that the latitudinarian spirit of our times should blind a conscience like yours. Oh, my child!"

There were faithful tears in her eyes.

"Do not be distressed," I said, gently, feeling a good courage. "I am walking faithfully, as I see the way. If I am blind, I shall still reach the light!"

"Oh, with that spirit you will! You will! And have you, then, no attachment for my grandnephew?"

"In the sense you mean, none; not the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

least!" I replied, from calm habit of thought: and then, being put face to face with the question, I realized that I had lied! Realized, suddenly! And, fearless of much, I was in terror, not of my untruth, but of my love. Were his daily letters (those unanswered letters), his soul's confessions, his boyish, manly, never-doubting love, taken from me, should I miss them? (That was implied in her question.) Yes, after all, as my own heart! I felt it, and I hated my love. I was reduced, then, to the condition of moral imbecility with the rest, and worse! They usually told the truth as they saw it. I had lied blankly.

"You are pale, dear—let me fan you."

"I am rather cold, I think," I said.

"I am tiring you. These are deep and vital questions, but your disdain of frivolity, your severity of purpose, your earnest truthfulness draw me to you. I am speaking of my grandnephew—of Forrester. This was paramount on my heart when I sent for you. The arms of our family love should be about him; he should be with us. You realize that. Dear Laura has been ill, and psychologically—dear child—you may have discov-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ered that her affections are—charming, but apt to be heedless. I speak to you with instinctive trust. My own home is freely—pleadingly—open to Forrester. Will you tell him so?"

"Surely—surely, it is your place to tell him."

I felt the blood in my cheeks. I used the fan at last gratefully.

"Alas, dear—the eccentricities of youth! He pays no heed to my voice. It is a message—a message. In the providence of God, you have influence over his precious soul. I know you will not refuse to give a message from me."

"I will be your amanuensis."

"Lettice! bring paper and ink."

"**MY DEARLY BELOVED FORRESTER**,—However far the lamb may have wandered on the cold and thorny mountains, a welcome awaits him who returns with a bruised and contrite heart. I, your aunt Augusta, yearn for you. Come to me. Though I may be debarred, literally, from meeting you at the gate—our modern town-houses being differently constructed—my heart goes out to you, even where you are, and weeps over you with inexpressible longing.

"Yours,

"**AUGUSTA ARUNDELL**

"(Per M. S.)."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I had disdained hysterics all my life, but, as I transcribed this letter, a desperate and immoderate desire to laugh seized upon my sinful heart.

“Lettice! Miss Scheffer has dropped her fan. What is the temperature of the room, Lettice?”

“Sixty-two, ma’am!” snapped Lettice, with bitter satisfaction.

“You sometimes read the mercury incorrectly, Lettice,” replied her mistress, soothingly. “You may go, Lettice.”

“Dear Miss Scheffer—one thing more and I will release you, for I know how stringently poor suffering Laura holds you. Dear child—bear with me—will you promise me, however greatly to your worldly advantage, not to consider Beeman Price (he is utterly, utterly absorbed in the world), not to consider him until he may, in time, show some inclination to approach the fold?”

“Most solemnly.”

“Eleanor’s temporary engagement to that greed-absorbed man was made without my consent; but she was delivered from the lions.”

“I fancy she usually is?”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Yes. Our sweet Eleanor—I speak to you with the utmost confidence—is the only really religious one in my sister's family. I think the child is full of earnest deliberation, and is only waiting to come forward. Take the fan with you, dear Miss Scheffer; your cheeks are unusually flushed, and your eyes are a trifle—a trifle—feverish. Lettice! Lettice! bring my homœopathic case. Take six of these little pellets, on retiring. Six—my child. But I forget!—you are far more learned in medicine than I."

"My own symptoms are a mystery to me, however," I replied, firmly and sadly. "I will take the pellets."

I was embraced, and the chariot bore me home.

"What is Augusta's fad now?" inquired Madam Arundell, coolly. "Temperance?"

"No, she has prescribed for me. I have some of her pellets."

"Great heavens!—you are not ill?"

"Not at all, but prevention is a noble theory, and I accepted the pellets."

"I declare, Augusta is deplorable!—to warn you of illness, when I never saw you looking so—charming."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"It is the bright day that brings forth
the adder and that craves wary walking."

"Perfectly deplorable!"

"Lord! Laura — can't ye see through a
joke? Martha 'll fling Augusta's old sugar
plums to perdition. When I eat confection-
ery—want something big enough to see and
some flavor to it. Come up to the fire, my
daughter, and get warm. Remember how
we shivered last time we went to 'Gusta's,
Laura? No wine—no fire—nothin' but
Croton water and 'booklets.' Gusta's got
the constitution of an ox. Come! come,
my daughter, come and get warm! God
bless ye!—house all sunshine since ye came
home."

CHAPTER XIX

JOAN took a trip down to the village store and purchased some new dishes, Mary Ann and Daniel having carried on a course of considerable robust demolition. Also, she brought back for Mrs. Scheffer and herself some brilliantly flowered calico cloth, of a design not authorized by anything in nature, and she and the convalescent sewed together with feminine anticipation.

"It surpass the rob's of Ne' York!" said Joan, trying Mrs. Scheffer's on her at last; "it call you back to youth, madam—by grasshus!"

Mrs. Scheffer, in her heart, admitted this, as she gazed in the glass. Joan, having redeemed her body, both towards health and such efflorescence of outward adornment—Mrs. Scheffer thought to touch on Joan's own spiritual condition—

"I long to get able to take you to church with me—once—Joan."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Wa-al—no matter if I go to church with you, I get abs'lution for it," said Joan, whose good heart saw a way through all difficulties.

Mrs. Scheffer sighed; but she was very fond of Joan, and they sewed on happily together.

Eleanor, meanwhile—if Katherine Eleanor Arundell could have realized in the remotest sense that Dan Scheffer, the Vermont farmer and amateur experimentalist, could deliberately design to marry her, his course might have been more interesting than it was, but it could not have been more arduous.

He was baffled by her sublime unconsciousness.

So they carried on the farm together, with Mary Ann as vigorous deputy.

"It is more of a uniform heat out here in the barn than it is in the house," said Miss Arundell, sitting on a three-legged stool near by to see that Dan milked properly, and now and then holding out her cup for a fresh supply to sip; "it is charming."

"Them that loves new milk has a honest heart in them and a stout corporation," said Mary Ann, seriously, who was collecting the hens' eggs in odd corners. Mary Ann

THE MORAL IMBECILES

was constantly singing, these days. What the old man said to his wife she never disclosed, but that he did once say something to her was mysteriously and indelibly impressed on the minds of those about her.

"It's the breath of the cattle makes it so warm here," said Dan.

"And their breath is so sweet," said Eleanor.

"It isn't any sweeter than yours," said Dan, punching his big head against the side of the cow.

"Thank you! But mine would not warm a barn, I am sure—unless you had been making a stew, Mr. Scheffer!—a rabbit stew with whole onions and carrot tails."

Eleanor was merry. This was all only a little episode in her life, and she would be going back to more luxurious scenes. To Daniel, it was life in the intense sense of tragedy.

"Don't bother the poor boy about his stew," said Mary Ann; "'twas a regular man-stew, that's all, and good for the corporation."

"Say 'physique,' Mary Ann."

"You know very well, Miss Eleanor, I

THE MORAL IMBECILES

won't giddy myself with words I ain't eddi-cated up to, no more than a Chinaman's handwriting.—So ye want to set agin my will, do ye!" she cried, seizing a squawking hen with a practised hand. Eleanor shrieked.

"It 'll bite you, Mary Ann!"

"Bite me!—with her claws in me fist and her neck like a string. Ye'd ought to marry a farmer, Miss Eleanor. Ye'd assist him fine!"

"*You* would make a good farmer's wife, Mary Ann."

"I want none," said Mary Ann, giving the mad hen a toss towards its loft. "My prayers on that subjec' is aisy said, with a quick 'amin' to it."

"What has set you against marrying?" teased Eleanor.

"It's never being wanted has set me agin it," said Mary Ann, with paralyzing frankness. "I'll take in the eggs and be gettin' the tay ready."

"She *would* make a good farmer's wife," said Eleanor, contemplating the scene around her and its fitness to Mary Ann.

"Very good," said Daniel, calmly, rising with his full pail.

"And yet—the calf is biting your coat-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

tail, Mr. Scheffer!—I really think she is not good enough for you.”

“How high do you think I ought to look?”

“Oh, quite out of my sight!—some woman principal of a school, or one of these women—women lawyers, or doctors, like your sister—my own dearest Martha.”

“Do you think I am anything like my sister?”

“You are her big image.”

“But in other qualities besides looks?”

“She is so entrancingly sharp. But you, of course, are just a bit more gentle.”

“I am going to try to cultivate decision of character, Miss Arundell. Will you carry the lantern?”

“You know I always carry the lantern. Don’t forget to feed Billy.”

“I never yet forgot any creature under my care. I’d rather go hungry myself.”

“Oh Daniel! the calf really chewed up some of your coat while you stood there! It looks so comical.”

“I am glad you are amused. You must mend it for me, this evening.”

“Oh, Joan will mend it, certainly.”

“But I said that you must mend it.”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Indeed, I sha'n't touch your old coat! And if you speak to me in that way, I shall not help you with your farm-work any more!"

"That settles it. I give up decision of character for the time being. Besides, if you should mend my old coat, I should be transformed in it. I should be a king in disguise. If ever I won any success, I should wear it for the occasion; if I finished my course like a good knight, I would ask to be laid out in it."

Daniel had set down the pail and stood, leaning against Billy's stall, pale and tall, regarding Eleanor with his black eyes, that were both fearless and unspeakably tender.

Eleanor thought his pose majestic, and—tender-hearted—her lip trembled with the pity of it—that he should not have been born in an appropriate class. "I am sure you will succeed," she said, earnestly.

Daniel's eyes smiled at her. "By sharpness or gentleness?"

"Billy is hungry. It is interesting in a woman to be sharp, but not in a man."

"I will feed Billy; and I shall try to prove interesting, too. Don't forget it!"

CHAPTER XX

ELEANOR had a way of her own to the shoemaker's shanty. She had read in books of people living as Shoemaker Prophett and his wife lived, and the picturesque realism of the state captured her.

"There's an unusual storm coming. Don't take one of your long walks to-day, Miss Arundell," said Dan.

"Very well," said Eleanor, smiling graciously, and took her long walk quite as usual.

"Lord sakes, dearie," said Mrs. Prophett, "do the folks know ye've come this gait ahead o' the snow-storm?"

"I do not have to account for my actions to any one," said Eleanor, sweetly, laying aside her cloak and taking her accustomed seat by the fire.

"Ain't she han'som'!" said wizened old Mrs. Prophett, openly, to her wizened old husband.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Tur'ble! — but beauty fades," said Salodius Prophett, who was professedly a pessimist.

Eleanor had something on her mind, and was not to be diverted from it :

"Forty years, you say, you have been working at shoemaking, Salodius—ever since the tree fell on you and twisted you?"

"If I'd been a lucky man, I'd 'a' got shut o' all this world's trouble then—but no, I had to get twisted."

"Don't mind him, dearie: he's stiddy as stiddy, and a kind heart to him."

"Yes, if I didn't have a heart I couldn't suffer, ye see. And as for stiddy, I don't love the stuff—never did. 'Twould have proved something of a consolation if I'd loved that, ye see: so—no, I was made with no taste for it."

"Don't mind him, dearie. He's worked patient all the days long, and sometimes into the night."

"Oh, shoe-mendin' ain't work so much as it is philosophy; footwear 's a philosophy. Look at Deacon Snell's boots I'm mendin' here—look at them excrescences his bunions has punched in 'em! There's sufferin' for

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ye! Look at little Jud Hopkins's shoes, over there; the sole o' one has to be made three inches thick, so't he can stub along even over this vale o' woe. We're called to run a race in this world, and into it we come, corns, bunions, uneven legs, twisted spines. Look at the whole lot over there, gaspin' with some sorrer or other. Look at 'em!"

"And you have worked all these years," said Eleanor, "to keep your wife and yourself from being sent to the poorhouse, and to save enough for ill or helpless days, and—you told me—for burial?"

"And hain't done it! Sickness enough, but not our last, and the rent o' the hut, and vittles to eat!"

"Well," declared the moral imbecile, "I have quite a bit of money put for me already in this bank and that bank, besides a rich family to leave me much more."

"Your shoes are stanch and han'som', sure enough, miss. May the corns of sorrer and the tags o' poverty never touch 'em!"

Eleanor gave a subdued melodious laugh, but her eyes were fixed on Salodius with a very wide earnestness.

"And before I came down here to-day, I

THE MORAL IMBECILES

made out this check," she went on, "and you have got to take it. It is only a little of what I have, and it is the sum you said would save your wife and you from the things you dread. I am of age to do what I like with my own. And that paper will be just as good as gold to you at the bank in your nearest town."

"I know that." Salodius looked at the paper in blank amaze, but shook his head. "May the corns of sorrer and the tags o' poverty never touch ye," he repeated, "but 'twon't do! There'd be trouble. 'Tain't the way o' the world."

"It is *my* way, in this case," said Miss Arundell, "and there is never any trouble if I am let to have my own way, Salodius; otherwise, there'll be great mountains of trouble. Put it away—it's got to be. Now for the book! Mrs. Prophett to read, and you to expound, as usual."

"'Twon't do!"

"Isn't it remarkable that Mrs. Prophett can read so beautifully, but does not know the meaning of it, and you cannot read, but can explain it all so wonderfully! I love to hear you. The book!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“ May the corns of sorcer never—”

“ Put it away, Salodius. The book !”

Mrs. Prophett, with trembling excess of joy, proceeded eagerly to execute the young lady’s wishes: the slow tears ran down the cheeks of Salodius.

“ Begin where I left off ?” said Mrs. Prophett.

“ Certain, certain. Where else ?” said Salodius.

“ ‘ She shall not see me. I will en-en-en-sconce me behind the ar-ar-arras.’ ”

Mrs. Prophett paused listening for elucidation.

“ Ahem ! Ensconce — old d’rivitive — become by vulgar parlance ensquat — fin’lly contracted inter squat — plain squat. I will squat me. There ye got the whole sense of it.”

Mrs. Prophett gazed, stupefied at the learning of her lord, who continued :

“ ‘ Behind the arras ’ — simply any airy portion o’ the room — near the winder.”

Salodius was grave and dauntless, Mrs. Prophett simply edified ; the moral imbecile’s expression was that of one who is participating frankly at a feast.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Lord!” said Mrs. Prophett, at last, looking up from these digested pearls of the Bard of Avon—“how it snows! and the wind!”

“Yes, and will be dark,” said Eleanor. “I must be going.”

“Deed ye mustn’t! Ye sha’n’t! I’ll make ye comfortable here. They’ll come for ye.”

Eleanor laughed. “I love the snow. I love the wind. I would not miss my sport with them for any money! Good-bye!”

“If I wasn’t a cripple!” groaned Salodius: the old woman clung nervously to her cloak. But Eleanor went out with the vigorous boyish stride to which she had accustomed her long limbs amid these wintry scenes, and stanchly breasted the storm, out of their sight. In another ten moments she would have given anything could she have retraced her steps even to that poor haven.

The darkness descended like a curtain promptly dropped. The biting wind flung the harsh snow persistently, painfully, against that tender face. Eleanor Arundell had never been so treated. Here and there was only a dim outline of the drifted path, and soon all outline ceased.

“I am getting lost!” she gasped, at last;

THE MORAL IMBECILES

and none the less the sifting snow bit and stung her face.

"But I must keep walking—keep walking—or I shall die. They always keep walking." After considerable baffling progress of this sort, she stumbled against a bowlder, covered her aching eyes and face with her cloak, and lay there in the dreadful night and loneliness, sobbing out her despair.

"Still, I must try to keep walking," she moaned. "But if I should walk over the ledge." And then agonizing thoughts thronged thick upon her—the sumptuous city home, the rich young life of health and joy—to end here! She heard her grandmother's eulogistic sighs over her foolhardiness; she heard the wailing of Joan and Mary Ann: and, in that desolation, she admitted an intuition, as piercing as the snow, that there was one who would mourn for her more than all: one, too, so powerful to help!

She scrambled up on the bowlder. "Dan! Dan!" she called, with her back to the wind and stamping her numbed feet. Still "Dan! Dan!" she called, but that unutterably pitiless night gave no answer.

Sinking, and again desperately struggling

THE MORAL IMBECILES

to her feet, she saw the tiniest star afar off in the waste of snow, a star of the earth that swung and trembled. With a last effort she plunged towards it, stopping now and then to call with all her strength "Dan! Dan!" Suddenly the star came leaping towards her—it grew large and dazzled her.

When Dan saw her face, all sternness died out of his own, and Eleanor Arundell flung herself on his broad breast, simply as a wrecked mariner touching shore.

"Come, dearest, come!" said Dan, with great good cheer, for her sake—"come! we must go home!"

"I'd rather stay here a little," gasped Eleanor. "I am so tired—Daniel. You won't tell Martha?"

"Tell her what?"

"That I got lost."

"Never!" A smile quivered under Daniel's sleeted and frozen mustache. "We must walk. We must go home. Hang to my arm—so—I can half carry you. Come!"

Eleanor struggled on bravely, but she had been already nearly exhausted.

"Daniel!" she moaned, at length, sinking in the snow, "I cannot! You must go on

THE MORAL IMBECILES

and leave me—and—come back for me, when I am rested—rested."

Daniel lifted her to her feet. "Come!" he cried—"a little farther! Come—my darling!"

Eleanor did, indeed, call up her last remnant of strength, to meet the drifts and the beating wind, and sank again, this time without consciousness.

Daniel, who had measured the emergency and his own ability to save at last, fastened the lantern to his belt, and lifted this burden—and it was no small or light one—in his arms, renewing the wild struggle homeward. On and on, till his straining arms and hands grew numb, till the snow seemed to be beating in fire against his very brain. Still doggedly, desperately, persistently on, till the home door was reached, and opened by eager watchers, and he staggered in across the threshold.

Daniel Scheffer never fainted—was hardly expected, even in this present crisis, to be either frozen or exhausted.

He ordered what they were to do with Eleanor, in a voice painfully gruff. "No wonder"—they thought—"that he is *cross*."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

After a bath in ice-cold water, this son of the Northern hills dressed himself in his melancholy best, set his teeth at the pain tingling in his members, smiled at the ice still in his hair, and went in to inquire for his lady love.

Her eyes were wide open, and the ministering Joan had clothed both her wayward act and her beautiful person in garments of saintly white; scarcely whiter, however, than her face. She held out her hand to Daniel, with a smile.

"When I have my own establishment, Daniel," she murmured, kindly, "you shall always have some place in it."

"Yes," said Daniel, with benign assurance, "I know that."

CHAPTER XXI

I HAD requested that Forrester should answer his grandaunt Augusta's letter to her in person, but he appealed solely to the amanuensis.

"When" [he wrote] "I saw the beginning of that letter, 'My dearly beloved Forrester,' in your handwriting, I jumped up into heaven, Martha—and that is straight. I know it is not fair to call those your words; but, fact is, I cannot possibly think of them as anybody else's words.

"I guess you laughed when you were reeling off that billycock of Aunt 'Gusta's. Does she think I'd come mooning around to live on her in her old cold storage brass chandelier battery?

"I'm working like a horse. I'm doing prime. And there's talk, Martha, about my being promoted, pretty soon, to section boss.

"Give my love to Aunt 'Gusta, and thanks for her very exceptable letter. She said I was a lamb wandering on the thorny mountains. Tell her the mountains are not thorny ; they're only rocky—and I don't mind the hardest kind of a scrabble if I can get to the one I love, in the end.

"Yours with the love of all my harte,

"FORRESTER."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I did not transport this letter, neither did I read it aloud to any one. But, the very day that I received it, Mrs. John Arundell appeared, anxiously.

She was in a Russian sleigh, magnificently plumed, and sent in a servant with the summons: "Mrs. John Arundell requests to know if Miss Scheffer will kindly ride with her in the park?"

"What's 'Gusty doin', out tobogannin' to-day?" said my host, at the window. "Good soul—eighty years old—thermometer down to zero—blue nose—bunnit on her ear. Why didn't she come in her carriage? Why don't she come in and thaw out? What the devil's up?"

"Oh, she is merely toughening herself, you know," replied Madam Arundell, smoothly. "I presume the temperature outside, to-day, is not excessively lower than that she enjoys at home."

"He! he! Laura. You can bite, and smile like an angel. You don't like it because she's come to take Martha."

"Certainly, I was expecting to take Miss Scheffer to drive, myself, in a suitable manner. I do not know how it is with Miss

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Scheffer, but I do not, myself, care for coasting through our crowded and public highways."

"He! he! Put your feet up, Martha, and cock your beaver."

"What news, my child?" said Mrs. John Arundell, fixing her kind eyes upon me. The robes that surrounded and covered us were in themselves a revelation of satiating wealth. A complex Russian in boots guarded us in the rear.

"Did you not think your nephew would address you personally?" I asked.

"No," said she—and I loved her for the simple good-heartedness in her averted face. "You see, he has become so accustomed to addressing you."

One of the blushes that came so fatally since I had realized my own guilt overspread my face.

"Dear Miss Scheffer, is my bonnet on straight?" murmured this noble soul. "It feels—perhaps I am mistaken; it is so embarrassing to have one's bonnet awry. Ah—thank you! You are flushed with the exertion of leaning over. This direct contact with the bracing air will do you good. I

THE MORAL IMBECILES

wonder that Laura never exposes herself to its exhilarating influence. They have very handsome sleighs. Precious Eleanor uses them when she is at home. Why does she not return to her natural guardians?"

"She is fascinated with the scenery and the exercises at Haskell."

"She should not be allowed to have everything she is merely fascinated with."

"There are physical conditions in her case, I understand, which make it necessary she should have what she wishes."

"I fear, dear Miss Scheffer—I speak to you with the utmost confidence—I fear Dr. Clitus Latimer is a fraud. He encourages my poor sister in every natural weakness of the flesh. Precious Eleanor he cannot spoil; but I see traces of wilfulness even in her."

I was silent.

"But what from dear Forrester?" she added.

"He sends many thanks to you for your letter. But he seems very much immersed in the active struggle he has taken up. He speaks of probable advancement. He seems disinclined, in fact, to—well—to sit down in any one's lap."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"My dear, I could not hold Forrester! It is a singular fact that the Arundells have had, at regular intervals, a giant in the family. I, too, had in mind pursuits of an active nature for him. Even of a philanthropic—even, dear, of a religious nature. I have now at my home 5000 leaflets, received this morning from my printer; a little effort of my own"—she blushed—"on substituting free righteousness for the thraldom of intemperance. Think how my grandnephew, if he were so minded, could aid me in disseminating these works!"

"Yes, but is it not true that there must be adaptability in all employments?"

"Ah, there my heart bleeds for him! Why should not my grandnephew rise to such an enterprise as this?"

Beeman Price was out with a cutter, himself driving, one man-servant at his side.

As we first met, he lifted his hat. The air had sting enough to make even his tough skin glow. He was not an ill-looking man, except for his greedy and compressed air of the world.

But Mrs. Arundell sighed. "Think of Forrester becoming a cold, self-absorbed

THE MORAL IMBECILES

worshipper of Mammon, like that!" she said.

"He could not!" I cried, unguardedly. "It is not in his nature! Whatever the poor boy's failings, he is noble, impulsively compassionate, unselfish!"

Good Mrs. Arundell, to my astonishment, preened herself, uttered a gratified "click, click!" in her throat. And her face of elevated emotion was suddenly metamorphosed into the most simple and natural smile.

"Is my bonnet?—ah, thank you! dear. Yes, yes, I think dear Forrester has the germs of grace."

Again we met Beeman Price—whose trotter was swift—making the rounds of the park. And I regret to say that something in the exuberance of the air, as well, perhaps, as a deficiency in breeding, caused him to *wink* at us, this time, distinctly, innocently, and alarmingly.

"We shall continue," said Mrs. John Arundell, "as we go round and round, to meet that distressing individual."

"Certainly," said I, laughing; "but, after all, he is only a fellow human being, and will do us no harm."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

" You are aware, dear Miss Scheffer, of a promise you made me the other day ? "

" I am vividly conscious of it, and I am one, you know, who holds to her promises."

" Very good. Certainly." She uttered the "click, click!" in her throat again, but addressed the driver, "*Turn the horses, James,* and thus reverse our course."

But she had not calculated on the remarkable advantage in diplomacy of that light-gearred trotter over her own elephantine bays. Plumes, robes, silver-bells, and all other paraphernalia, we soon came face to face again with Beeman Price. His wink, this time, had even a merry significance.

" If you feel sufficiently invigorated, my dear, perhaps it will be as well for us to return before we become wearied, and thus undo the benefit this elastic atmosphere has given us."

" I think that altogether the wiser course," I replied, and returned the clasp of her clinging frank old hand with genuine admiration, as she left me at the Forrester Arundell mansion.

Beeman Price called that evening ; and my hostess desiring, as the next best thing,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

that I should pocket the goods which had not accrued to her own family, adroitly arranged in her own masterly fashion that I should be in the reception-room with him alone.

"You and the old girl had quite a tricky time out there in the park to-day," said he, with exuberant joviality, for him.

I felt my lips tremble, but, "frankly," I said, "I do not like to hear you speak of Mrs. John Arundell in that way. I esteem her too highly."

"'Highly,' I should think! She's enough to break up a funeral with her lectures and her leaflets—and you know it."

"There's a vast deal behind that, which we do not see at first, and I admire her."

"Egad! *You* gettin' befuddled? Better look sharp. My proposition stands just the same."

"Ah!"

"Just the same. Ready to consider it?"

"You wish, I understand, to bestow all—*all* your worldly goods on me, without reserve."

"No, hang it! No such nonsense! But tell ye what I will do, I'll give ye three

THE MORAL IMBECILES

thousand a year, outside household expenses.
Eh?"

"It is no inducement. It would have to
be all or nothing."

"Jump too far, ye know, and ye'll land in
the ditch on the other side."

"I perfectly realize that."

"Can't ye be sensible? Gad, I took to ye
'cause I thought ye was keen, and ye're more
finiky than a mouse, and a worse flirt'n that
girl Eleanor!"

"A woman is but a woman, you see."

"But you're actin' the fool on purpose—
ye wa'n't born so."

"It is all the more hopeless if it is a matter
of principle."

Shuffling steps were heard wandering here
and there, then dawned on us with a
"Where's Martha? You here, Price? Glad
to see ye—how d'do? Courtin' Martha, eh?
He! he! I ain't scared—not a bit scared.
Lots o' tunes to Martha."

But he sat down before us, in all the elegance
of his feeble old dandihood, trembling visibly.

"If it annoys him thus," I murmured to
my scornful suitor, "perhaps you had better
not call. My first duty is to—them."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Have you got to be a fool because the rest of 'em are?" returned Beeman Price, plainly.

"Yes, that is my present profession—and, in fact, my desire."

"Ketchin', eh? Well, I'll get out. If you ever come back to your senses—where ye was once—let me know."

CHAPTER XXII

ONE quiet morning soon after this, Watson, breathless, overtook me in the hall.

"I have just gleaned this, mum, from a scrap cook had laid over her tins, mum. My eyes fell on it by chance. The paper is three days old, mum. God 'a' mercy, mum! Go and find him, mum. For God's sake, go at once, mum!" Tears were flowing down the old servitor's cheeks.

"Heroic act!" I read, in a short paragraph in the corner of that ill-used scrap. "Forrester Pardell, a street-car conductor at —— jumped and saved the life of a child who ran suddenly in front of the car. The motorman could not apply the brakes in time. The brave fellow threw the child from danger, but was himself seriously, perhaps fatally, injured. Was taken at once to the hospital."

"But this is Forrester *Pardell*," I said.

"Oh, mum, that's a ty-pog-ra-phal error—

THE MORAL IMBECILES

'tis he! Oh, mum, you know it, mum! Oh, don't *you* turn white and fall, for God's sake, mum! You are the brace of the family. Oh, think of *him*, mum!"

I was as sure as Watson that it was indeed he, and, as the "brace of the family," I pulled myself sharply together.

"Order the carriage for the first express, Watson. I will get ready." This I did, wisely, first of all. Then I went to Madam Arundell.

"Your grandson has been hurt in an act of self-sacrifice connected with his duty. I do not know how badly. I do not know even—I am going!"

She turned very white and set her lips, but she did not have an "attack," and I had felt that she would not.

"I knew how it would be!" said she, with an open bitterness that was sealed like a pent lake in my own breast.

"If ever I can bring him home to you, everything will be at its brightest?"—I felt my heart and my voice breaking, and stopped.

"I will exert myself," said she, taking quick, ambitious steps about the room as a mental

THE MORAL IMBECILES

relief. "Yes, yes, I will try to bear bravely my own duties and yours, too, till you return—you return—"

I flew along the hall to my host's private sitting-room. He was not asleep, but sitting, with an expression of singular sweetness and patience on his face. I did not speak to him of any hurt or tragedy, but stooped, taking both his hands in mine. "Forrester has been away a long time," I said. "I am going to try to find him."

"That's right, Martha—that's right," he cried, fluttering, gladly. "I knew you'd go and get him when the right time came. Knew it! Yes. How soon? This evening, perhaps? To-morrow? Leave everything with you, Martha. Tell him he shall have any horse he wants, no matter what price. Tell him he shall have his own rooms and valet. Tell him—"

I sped down to the waiting carriage, and, having still time, I stopped a moment at Mrs. John Arundell's. She heard my news without a word, but as I was turning away, she caught me, and, looking at me solemnly and tenderly, gave me one kiss, unlike her usual flowery embraces. Her lips quivered.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

I tore myself from her with a miserable sob, and was away again.

Never fast enough, though the progress of the train seemed like the prolonged, tireless flight of a bird through the air. At another time I should have smiled to think how naturally and unhesitatingly I had purchased my seat in a drawing-room car; but now, with this enforced repose, I wished rather that it had been an instrument of torture.

“It was *you*,” said my heart, over and over, “who advised him to work, to maintain his independence, to endure hardship; and afterwards the encouragement or approval you meted out to him were as scarce and cold as though they were diamonds solely for your own hoarding.

“And if your Spartan method of friendly discipline should meet now only a dying or a silent form!”

I set my face and my heart, and in me there was no forgiveness either for myself or this possible fate.

The cabmen assailed me at the familiar town.

“How soon can you get me to the hospital?”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Twenty minutes." "Fifteen." "Ten," said one. I was in the cab, the spiritless horses whipped into an ostentatious but constrained gallop.

I knew the superintendent of the hospital. His conventional, smiling greeting almost enraged me.

"Where is Forrester Arundell?" I said.

"Ah, yes. Number sixteen. Noble fellow that! You come from his friends?"

"Yes; take me to him."

"Well," the superintendent sighed, "he has been unconscious most of the time for the past two days. But he may—he *may*—"

In answer to my look, he rang the electric bell at his side, and a matron appeared.

"Yes, you can see him," said she. "No harm in that."

She turned to me suddenly. "Is your name Martha?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad you've come, then. It 'll comfort him, if he ever senses things again. He couldn't or he wouldn't give us any address to write to; but before he went off into this

THE MORAL IMBECILES

state, he gave that name ‘Martha’ a pretty dance, I can tell you!”

I crept like one in a dream up to that bedside—that bare hospital bedside—the low, disordered, seemingly comfortless bed.

The matron lingered a little, curiously; now and then a nurse came in and lingered, curiously; but if they asked me questions, I hardly answered them, or was conscious of their presence.

I lifted the matted hair from the sunken, pallid forehead. The right arm was in splints. I took the other bloodless hand and held it in both mine.

Mine were tingling exultantly to find even so much life here on the hospital cot. As I held the hand, I knew that soon the heavy lids would open and the eyes would look at me, and they did so. I knew the expression that would be in them, and it was there; but, as they looked thus a moment, wide and steadily, a hungry sorrow began to creep over them, the poor face to twitch. And, at that, I sat down beside his pillow and took his head on my breast, and my face I laid against his.

The blood of life came into his cheeks.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Thus he lay with closed eyes a few moments, and when I put him back he slept.

"He is *sleeping* now—he is not dead," I said, with impressive consequence, and began to bustle about and give orders in my own insufferable way.

CHAPTER XXIII

THESE directions were unhesitatingly obeyed, though I heard myself, once, designated, in a whispered conversation among the nurses, as "Spitfire," which did not amaze me; and again, as "made of money," which was an astounding revelation.

I was allowed as an established fact everywhere, and way was made for me. The doctors became sedulously attentive to my patient; his wounds were freshly dressed; he was carried by a brace of heedful arms to a clean bed in a private apartment; a fire sprang to glowing life in the grate. Instead of the old gray shawl that had swathed his shoulders, he lay majestic, in the choicest dressing-gown the chief dry-goods emporium of the town afforded.

A boy was sent a tramp countryward for real milk from a cow, not to be accepted except under witness of the fact.

At this sarcasm, encouraging smiles dawn-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ed about me, but I snapped on, disregarding.

Beef juice I extracted with my own hands in the kitchen, and returned with it, triumphant, to recline in a luxurious chair before the fire, waiting another waking from the couch.

I was perfectly conscious when this came, though I paid no immediate heed to it, giving the roused one merely a quiet side face, as though I had been sitting there from time immemorial. I knew the excited joy, the glorified speculation in those blue eyes. I waited for the long, satisfied sigh, and the feeble voice :

“ Well, we’ve got home at last, haven’t we, Martha ? ”

I went to the bed with my offering of concentrated nourishment, and demurely fed him, a spoonful at a time. This finished, he looked childishly, eloquently, at the cup.

“ Our family’s rich, you know, Martha,” said he, as a telling and general suggestion.

“ Still, I am the ‘boss,’ you know,” I replied, employing his own illustrative manner of speech, and putting the empty cup out of sight.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

He gave up heedlessly for himself, as he always gave up, and showed his superb teeth as though I had resuscitated him by some moving galaxy of wit.

I sat down by the fire again ; but presently, being aware, though he lay patiently still and made no sign, that his aspect was simply that of a forlorn, heart-broken baby, I rolled the great chair over to the bedside, and still giving him that unenlightened side face, took his hand in mine.

He drew in a whistle through his teeth, in a feeble imitation of the old manner.

“Martha,” said he, “I always felt it, being so strapping big and strong—and so many lame, pitiful ones all about.”

This was an expression of contentment with his lot if he should be maimed and lame—which he was not, in the end. But there was no thought for the hardness of his trial or the cruel blow that had fallen on him in his path of duty.

“I know you, Martha ; you’ll love me, just the same.”

“More,” I commented, with entire self-command in the brown hand that pressed his a trifle more warmly.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"That was my mother's ring—I knew you would wear it."

"It was a mysterious demand of your grandmother's; she threatened heart failure, otherwise. The — well, the worldliest people are sometimes the most superstitious. She did not explain to me, but I fancy she thinks I am expiating thereby some possible twinges of her own conscience."

If my manner was sarcastic, Forrester took only the tone.

"Your voice rests me. I'm sleepy. But first—Martha—you know—we've not been married yet."

"Go to sleep."

"But we shall be?"

I arranged his pillows, as though they were the perversity preventing his slumbers.

"When, Martha?"

Stooping thus over his tense, white face, I had a singular sensation for a woman who is asked to plight her troth; it was, rather, as though I had been the mother who bore him.

"Martha—when?"

"Have you not had everything your own way, dear?" I said, dryly, my eyes straight-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ly on a level with his. “Against my resolution and all the probabilities of life ; and though crushed out of the fight, as it were, for a time—still, have you failed to have your own way ?”

“No,” he smiled.

“Then go to sleep—Forrester.”

This was as near graciousness as I could be expected to approach ; the full measure of satisfaction it afforded my patient startled me. He made a gesture as if to lift both hands, winced with pain, but resolutely held up high the one available, thin and bloodless as it was.

“Father,” he said, not with any affectation of prayer, but simply as though he were addressing some one in the room with an earnestness that shook him — “Father, forgive me the sins that sent me wandering ! —I thank Thee for my happiness !”

And this wild boy showed not the least shame for the great tears rolling down his cheeks.

“Martha, you are not afraid of my going wrong again ?”

“Never !” I said, rather chokingly, and with a willing impulse gathered his head

THE MORAL IMBECILES

close to my heart again, watching him sink off into sleep.

Walking, in a measure, consciously, and rather painfully, so many years, in the way of righteousness—there was something in the utter and trustful consecration of this moral imbecile that touched me, as though the Lord of Life had stood in the room, smiling sadly for my unbelief.

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE are some people who work with doubtful results and venture that not fully assayed in their own mind. Not so, Daniel Scheffer.

When his various screws and contraptions were finally resolved into the right shape, and, above all, the controlling key of the mechanism found to move backward and forward with the running ease of a natural law, then, instead of losing his head, Daniel smiled for his past heavy vigils, palpitated a little at the thought of being anticipated in the very simplicity of the discovery, and forthwith set about making the results his own.

“Do you suppose, Mary Ann,”—said Eleanor, sitting on the three-legged stool in the barn — “that Mr. Scheffer is engaged and has gone off to see his fiancée?”

Mary Ann, who had fought with a temporary “hired boy” and banished him,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

milked away jubilantly, but hummed with significance,

“The old man says to his wife, says he”—

“Mary Ann! answer me!—when I ask you a question. What do I care what the old man said to his wife? I help you about the barn work because it is interesting, and I choose to do so; but when I ask you a question I expect an immediate answer.”

“Well, then, Miss Eleanor, them that fools with a blast must take the explosion. 'Tis no ‘fancy’ he’s gone of for—'tis a *spray*!”

“A spree! I do not believe it.”

“Oh, but I know them! 'Tis born in them—ivery one o’ them. Some must be at it frequent, and some takes their time; mind that—some takes their time!”

“I tell you, Mary Ann, I do not believe Mr. Scheffer has gone on a spree!”

“Ho, hum! ‘The old man says—’”

“I forbid you to tell me what the old man says.”

“Them that goes afoot, Miss Eleanor, sees more snakes than them that rides in carriages; they gets the worl’ly wisdom, God help them! Hear me sayin’, 'tis common to

THE MORAL IMBECILES

them all. Father Donnelly himself would be at it two days to the ivery other month, quiet and hairmless in his room. Mr. Dan'l is that topmost and sojerly, I doubt, but he takes them only one to the year. But them kind has it *hard*. Mind what I'm sayin', them kind has it hard. I wouldn't wonder but he'd take a week to it—maybe two."

Eleanor smiled contemptuously. She had not the least fear that Daniel had gone off for a season of vinous hilarity. But she did feel piqued and wounded.

That Daniel, although he had said some tender things to her, in the snow-storm, should not feel that he was in a proper position actually to propose to *her*—Katherine Arundell—was becoming and natural; but that he should leave her without explanation, and go off to propose to some other girl, was a grave and haunting woe.

"I think we must be going back to New York very soon, Mary Ann."

"Faith, that would be an ill trick while the master's away."

"You and Joan need not go because I do."

"You know very well, when you go, the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

whole artillery moves after, like a bob to a kite."

"Immediately, though, as soon as Mr. Scheffer returns, I intend to go back."

Mary Ann sighed.

"You would love to be a farmer's wife, would not you, Mary Ann?"

"'Tis no farmer's wife I'd like to be so much as the farmer himself!"

"Well, if you are good and faithful, and read Aunt Augusta's leaflets, sometime we will buy you a little place like this to have all for your own."

"Miss Eleanor," said Mary Ann, with an appreciation not to be subdued—"you're the divil! And she belaborin' all the rest of us with her sermons and scraps, and takin' you for the one saint in the family, and 'tis no saint you are, Miss Eleanor, hivun knows!"

"I am afraid, Mary Ann," laughed Eleanor, "that chopping wood with you, and pitching 'fodder,' and shelling corn, I have allowed you to become very familiar."

"'Tis the same One made us both!"

"That is true: that is very true, when one comes to think of it," said the moral imbecile, sadly.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Reminded of the corn-sheller, she went over to it as an interesting pastime, put one yellow ear in after another, and turned the crank.

"'Tis not ivery machine o' that size could make the noise!" commented Mary Ann, proudly. "I should think 'twas five o'clock, and that of a Saturday night, on Broadway!"

The big door slid open and shut again, and the merry face of the theological student beamed on them:

"I knew I should find you two here! You dismissed the boy?—well, he was a shirk. Can't I be of some assistance to you?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, agreeably and promptly, "you can cut up some hay and feed Billy." And being large in administrative ability, she stood by to see this accomplished.

"Now, what?"

"Nothing, that would please Mary Ann. She does not like to be interfered with. Sit down here and talk. Tell me the news from the village."

"Well, the news from the village really emanated from this quarter. It is that Dan-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

iel Scheffer has finally captured the bee in his bonnet, and is bound to be a rich man."

They were separated from Mary Ann, behind the partition of the stables.

"Oh!" said Eleanor, with flashing eyes—"so that is what he went away about!"

"Everybody guesses it. Why, did he not tell you?"

"No! He has no authority for confiding his affairs to me!"

"Now don't be high and mighty, Miss Arundell," said the gentle little fellow, not looking at her, but beaming straight ahead into Billy's face.

"You are so like my brother Forrester," said Eleanor, melting into sudden graciousness. "You are not so 'large'"—she was going to say, but continued kindly—"awkward as that dear boy, but you are so easy and nice to talk with. Every one says Forrester is just as sympathetic and easy as a woman to talk with."

"My!" said the youth. "And if one can be 'easy' and unconventional on this seat, it's almost a test case, isn't it?"

Eleanor wore an approving smile. "Now, Mr. Scheffer is not easy to converse with.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

He is a very estimable man : he has no common vices : he does not drink": she did not speak interrogatively, but she paused there.

"Daniel drink ! Ha ! ha ! Well, yes, sweet cider through a straw now and then."

"But he is not easy to converse with."

"If it has been hard for you and him to talk, then you have done your duty bravely ; for I've a notion I've usually seen you off one side murmuring away together like the purling, purling brook over the rubbly, rubbly stones. Ahem!"

Eleanor blushed at Billy, and the student threw another bright smile at him, both of which he received contemplatively, with his mouth full of substance.

Meanwhile Mary Ann had stamped in at the kitchen door with her milk-pails.

"Where is my affliction?" said Joan, who, with Mrs. Scheffer as co-partner, was officiating at the housework.

"She's a settin' with the little Methodist minister on the idge o' the horse-trough.

"The old man says to his wife, says he."

"You have a tune, by grasshus!" said

THE MORAL IMBECILES

Joan, with anger and contempt, and started for the barn.

“Suppaire! Suppaire!” she yelled, in startling accents at the door.

“Come in and have tea with us,” said Eleanor, turning her blushing face from Billy to the merry, unobservant smile of her companion. “We are so lonely. Come!”

“Gladly!” said he, following her rising movement without hesitation. He had, on former occasions, tasted the viands expressed from the great metropolis to this retreat, and the prowess of Joan since she had become cook. “I shall be delighted. Thank you!”

Mary Ann saw them coming in together, and took pains to warble her particular tenet of philosophy at Joan as the latter passed her.

“Shut you up!” demanded Joan—“of the old man, the old woman, and the whole family ancient!”

Mrs. Scheffer, Eleanor, and the theologian sat down together. He asked grace with a face just as cheerful as ever. Mrs. Scheffer approved of his prospective vocation, but not of being cheerful when one is asking grace. She maintained a very circumspect

THE MORAL IMBECILES

attitude, but could not control the abounding merriment at her own board.

Then the moral imbecile and the incipient divine betook themselves to the cribbage-board.

"Come again to-morrow," said the former.
"Do! Bring your books here and study.
It is so lonely."

"Gladly! Thank you. But, lonely? Ahem!
Why, what makes it lonely?"

Still, he did not look at her, his radiant countenance surveying the board.

"It is *always* lonely!" said Eleanor, smartly, a vivid flame in her cheeks, and biting her lips.

"Why, a little while ago you were enchanted with it and did not wish to go away!"

"You are so very like my brother," sighed Eleanor—"so perfectly simple about things."

"Then you might have me for a brother, too. I'm willing. It's only now and then you find a real simple person, most of us are so tiresome and inquisitive."

"I know it!" said Eleanor, gratefully.
"And I will take you for another brother."

The hand of the clock stood at "ten."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Won't you have a drink of cider before you go?" said Mrs. Scheffer, suggestively, and with old-fashioned hospitality, looking up from her knitting at the far end of the room.

"Gladly—thank you. Yes," said this newly adopted brother, courteously rising at once.

Joan lighted the way with a tallow-candle. There were clefts in the loose formation of the cellar-wall. In one cranny was Eleanor's straw; in one, Daniel's; in another, Joan's, and in a particularly deep nook lay Mary Ann's. More prominent was a fresh pile for chance guests. The student, schooled to the conventionalities of country life, at once selected one of these. Joan probed for hers.

Eleanor hesitated a moment. There was Daniel's straw—and no one would notice. Daniel was not gone on a spree, nor to propose to another girl. If she had done him any injustice in her thought, it would be but a beautifully contrite act to flatter him by using his straw. So she fluttered a bit of precious lace over it, and proceeded.

There were four barrels, all of the same recent vintage, in a row. The candle disclosed

THE MORAL IMBECILES

a blush of mysterious mildness and beauty on Miss Arundell's face.

"I've a new sister, Joan," said the theologian; "isn't she looking well?"

"Go 'way!" said Joan, as complete monitor of the situation, and bending over the barrel of her choice, with abstract devotion to her business. The brother and sister attached themselves to theirs less absorbingly; especially was Eleanor's season of dissipation brief, for the scampering of a rat caused her to drop her straw into the irrecoverable depths of the barrel and fly up-stairs for safety.

CHAPTER XXV

THE theologian appeared next day with his books, which he placed, without unstrapping, on the centre-table, and waited for Eleanor to suggest what to play. He knew that she would be extremely dignified as an initiative, and he adapted himself wholly to her mood.

“Isn’t it about time for Daniel to be coming back?” he said.

“Surely, I think so. I am very anxious to get back to New York. I wish to see Martha.”

“Who is Martha?”

“She is a dear brown cross old angel.”

“Do you keep her in the house?”

“Keep her! We do *anything* to get her to stay!”

“Is she too old for me, do you think, if by good-luck I could get acquainted with her?”

“She is too sweet for you or any man.”

“I thought you said she was cross.”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I said no such thing. She is only determined. She has more brains than you and I and grandmamma and her brother—"

"Oh, you mean *Martha Scheffer?*"

"There isn't any other Martha that I know of."

"But I thought she was after her profession—doctor. Daniel never told me. How in the world did you get her to come to New York?"

"I managed it."

There was so much finality in Miss Arundell's manner that the youth took a new tack.

"Shall I read aloud to you, sister?"

Eleanor broke down. "I should think we were at the 'testimony' meeting. Yes, you may, please."

"I will read 'The Lady of Shalott.' My voice is sweetest pitched at a sort of minor key."

"If you do I will go out to the barn and shell corn."

"Well, Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar,' then. The amaze is, to my mind, that, bending to light literature almost exclusively, as you do, this play of war and bloodshed, of daunt-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

lessness in vanquishment, of triumph in defeat, should be, in all profane literature, your book of books, your constant — your unwearying companion. What is there in it, may I ask, that you particularly affect?"

"I adore it *all*."

He read.

"Perhaps you have observed that I am getting hoarse," he remarked, after some time.

"I thought it was only the emotion you ought to feel."

"Pardon me for intimating that any one could grow weary in reading '*Julius Cæsar*.'"

"Well, then, we will go to the gymnasium."

The gymnasium was a sloping shed-roof, with a huge pile of straw under the exalted end. By a good run over the snow-crust, these vigorous young people could leap to the roof at its earthward terminus, race up its gradual slope, and descend as by winged flight.

They seized Mary Ann—who was feeding her chickens in the course of their track—between them, and bore her clairvoyantly onward through every step of thefeat to

THE MORAL IMBECILES

its triumphant submergence in the billows of straw beneath.

"You're the divuls!" said she, with returning breath. "But no more! D'ye hear me sayin'? No more! Go and get yer haythen Frenchwoman—if 'tis her I see, and not the cat, grinnin' at the winda. She can jump ye like a hill-goat, with no flesh to her bones."

"Mar'an is persuade' to romp," Joan enlightened Mrs. Scheffer;—"she fly as a cow!"

"It is all very unseemly."

"She have such wil' spirit as if it was some fever—perhaps yell' fever! My dear mees and the curé fly as an angel!"

The curé, with cheeks as pure and blooming as Eleanor's own, suddenly paused; ran into the house and got his books. "I am going, sister," he said. "I see a vision advancing over the snowy plain: he will wish to make explanations. I am only a brother."

Eleanor looked, and saw Daniel in the distance; her eyes widened and darkened. The student, observing, still looked merrily, but his femininely curved red lips trembled. "I am only a brother, you know. Good-bye!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

That wavering took both Eleanor and himself unawares. Her startled look fell full on his boyish face, more pathetic for its stanch struggle for unselfish bravery.

“Good-bye! sister.”

Eleanor, with a solemn face, leaned slowly forward and kissed his girlish cheek.

“That will always be sacred to me, sister. Good-bye!”

“She smacked him, begor’!” gasped Mary Ann, pausing in the death rites of an ancient fowl, which she intended palming off on Joan as one of her choicest chickens. “Well, ‘tis short work the old city missus ’ll make o’ *his* wooin’.”

“They flirt!” said Joan, with heathen approval; “but, alas! madame shall wither at him.”

Her sweet little companion gone—and yet such a brave, good little fellow!—and the stalwart, successful Daniel coming, Eleanor retired within the shed, some deep compunctions for the sorrowful contrasts of life burdening her heart and bringing the tears.

“Why, Eleanor, are you so sorry I am come back?”

A downcast face; no look, and no answer.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I have been to New York, for one thing."

"Why?"

"My present success and that assured for the future warranted me in going to see your grandparents. Your grandmother is satisfied. She has invited me to visit them."

"I did not know you were so anxious to make a visit in New York. *I* could have invited you. How is Martha?"

"They get telegrams that your brother is improving daily. He was hurt—they thought it best not to tell you—he is getting well. Martha went on to care for him."

"Forrester hurt!" Eleanor leaned her face against the uncomely shingles and sobbed like a child.

"He is getting better, dearest. Martha went on to care for him."

Eleanor omitted the "dearest" from her thought.

"'Getting well.' 'Martha went to him.'" A scheme—a tentative hope—one of those plans that she trusted Providence wholly to elaborate and secure for her, seemed opening into fruition. "'Martha—Forrester.'" She worked at a loose nail in the wall, awak-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ened interest on her tear-stained face, a deep luminousness in her eyes.

"I have your grandmother's permission to ask you to marry me, Eleanor. I have been doing that by manner and thought, I know, ever since I knew you, but I kept the words till I had the right."

Eleanor, with simple disregard for conventionalities, abruptly picked her way over the straw, walked firmly along the path, and disappeared in the house.

Her next advent into the social circle disclosed her with a pensive dignity of countenance, clothed entirely in black; even a large black bow, set very becomingly, it must be confessed, against her shining coil of hair.

"Mournin', is it?" soliloquized Mary Ann. "Well, 'tis better to mourn for him livin', than that the old missus should have a hand at him!"

"She weep to-day—but volatile, là!" chattered to herself the hopeful Joan. But where affections had evidently been so deeply engaged elsewhere, the usual chaperonage seemed unnecessary.

So it chanced that Eleanor, in black, was gravely perusing her 'Julius Cæsar' by the

THE MORAL IMBECILES

very subdued rays of the homestead lamp, when Daniel marched into the sitting-room, stout cause for inquisition on his handsome, smiling face.

“Eleanor, where is my straw?”

Then did Eleanor’s conscious blushes contrast most strangely with her nun-like apparel.

“It is very easy to lose one’s straw, I am sure,” she remarked, turning the page. “There are plenty more.”

“Eleanor, however vague and different our ethical theories may be, we all know the punishment awaiting those who tell fibs. Where is my straw?”

“Daniel!” said the moral imbecile, at this, lifting her eyes in absorbing and full confession—“a rat frightened me and I dropped it in the barrel.”

“Dropped in the rat, Eleanor?”

“The straw, Stupid!”

With this apostrophe she returned fearlessly to her page.

Daniel chuckled very softly, exulted, watched her with radiant eyes, like one whose cause is already secure.

“Eleanor Arundell, when a girl steals a

THE MORAL IMBECILES

man's straw to drink cider, and, more than that, when a girl calls a man 'Stupid,' she is irrevocably committed to him. Did you know that? It is a law of nature and a creed of man, which have never been confuted."

"I polished it well with lace first!" she declared, haughtily, staring at his assured face with dilated eyes, like a wild creature caught in an ambush.

"That makes no difference. You had my straw on your lips. Oh! but I won't kiss you, though I've a right. We're engaged, though—that is settled, Eleanor. We are engaged."

Eleanor herewith gave a sigh of relief.

"You are a *little* glad, aren't you?" said he.

"Yes; because of course I should marry sometime, and you are not at all disagreeable."

"I am very glad of that."

"And one in my position has so much trouble, you see. I was engaged once to a very disagreeable man because he was rich. And now that you are successful, grandmamma will be satisfied, and I think I would be very foolish not to settle down on this,

THE MORAL IMBECILES

for who knows how much trouble I might have again?"

"You are an astonishingly wise child. And you love me—a little?"

"Certainly—you are so much like Martha."

"Well," groaned Daniel, "at least you do not love any other man, Eleanor?"

"No," she said, very candidly, "except, Daniel, it might be some one in a perfectly brotherly sort of way."

"And I am more than a brother?"

"Yes," sadly admitted the moral imbecile, "one does not feel nearly so easy with you as with a brother."

CHAPTER XXVI

“GREAT times, Watson! Great times!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Where’s Martha? Oh, she’s coming today! Forrester coming! Ha! ha!—great times! My little Kate coming! Eh?—what—what’s his name, Watson?”

“Mr. Daniel Scheffer, sir. Given so much funds, cash down, sir, and an interest and partnership in the great manufacturing firm of Bates & Whittemore, sir; with other results of his mechanical genius undoubtedly—”

“Oh, d——n your Congressional reports, Watson. He’s Martha’s brother, ain’t he?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, that’s what I’m trying to get at. Martha’s brother. Liked him—very sensible young man. Martha’s brother. Making everything ready, Watson?”

“Yes, sir; certainly, sir.”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Where’s Martha? Who’s at the helm, Watson?”

“Mrs. Arundell, sir.”

“Well, well—spread your horns out where you can, Watson; toss the blanket every time you get a chance, Watson. What’s expense to us? Make a spread—make a spread, Watson. Have an open fire in every room in the house—hear? What’s the first dinner?”

“Little necks, sir; mock turtle—”

“Confound your clam shells and imitation vermin, Watson! Every time I make a meal I have to scrabble through as much offal and turf-weed as if I was wadin’ by the seashore. Have some turkeys, Watson—good, old-fashioned farm turkeys—he! he!—with stuffing and *sage* in it. Sage—mind that. And onions, Watson.”

Watson put up a gentlemanly white hand to hide the sympathetic but embarrassed smile on his lips.

“Got down the onions, Watson?”

“They were already ordered with the roast, sir.”

“Roast turkeys?”

“They shall be substituted, sir.”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"No, no—have 'em both—have 'em both, Watson."

"It is noted, sir."

"And the 'Perrière & Jouet' brand."

"Certainly, sir."

"Mrs. John Arundell invited, Watson?"

"Yes, sir, and Mr. John Arundell, sir, who is expected home from abroad."

"John comin' back again! Dear old boy! Fine boy! Great times! happy times, Watson!" The old man's face grew exceeding soft. He tried to brace himself again for hospitable forethought. "Perrière & Jouet brand, Watson."

"It is noted, sir."

"Should say it is! three dollars a quart, by the case. See here, Watson—don't want to offend Mrs. John Arundell—good woman—noble woman. Couldn't ye mix up a little arrow-root, orange-jelly—something, for her glass? Too bad! but please her better. Make it the same color. She'll think we're all drinkin' calves'-foot jelly—make her happier. Eh, Watson?"

Watson's faithful white hand sought his mouth again. "I think it can be managed, sir. But how shall we account for the nat-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ural percussion on the expulsion of the corks, sir?"

"Never mind that, Watson—never mind that," said the kind host, wearily. "We want to make everybody happy, Watson. Sad world, crushing world—rich or poor—but happy world, too, when we love folks, Watson. I've looked out for you—looked out for 'em all—all. Watson!—where's Martha?"

"Permit me to recall to you that she is speedily returning, sir."

"Yes—yes—sound mind, but forget, now and then, Watson, that's all. Great times! happy times! Made you independent, but I want you to stay 'long o' Martha, Watson, just the same. Stay and look out for 'em, and see that they name the first boy 'Forrester,' just as we've always done—d'ye hear?"

"Oh, sir! God bless you, sir! But it's you I'll serve, too, many a long year yet, sir!"

"Well, well—never mind. Thinkin', just now, little farmer's girl—knew long ago at my grandfather's place—his farmer's daughter; you remember, Watson?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Sir, permit me to endeavor to recall, sir—”

“Beauty—good—died; died, Watson, long ago. Used to draw water together with the old well-sweep—she and I. So—” With a smile he slowly made the gesture of the sweep. “I *want* some of it, Watson!” said he, suddenly looking up, with a childish, querulous, pleading voice. “I *want* some of that water!”

“It shall be procured, sir.”

“I want it right from the spring! tired of wine—tired of these bottled things—want to go back there and drink! youth—life—want to drink from the spring again, Watson!

“What did He say?—he that drinketh this—never thirst—never thirst—that’s it! Watson. Clearest mountains in the world there, Watson. Gates used to open, top of ‘em, at sunset. Saw some angels swingin’ there once—she and I! Smile away! but, *fact*, Watson—always remembered that! Want to go back there and drink from the spring. Watson! where’s Martha?”

“They are expected this evening, sir.”

But even as Watson spoke the words, he

THE MORAL IMBECILES

sprang forward to his master, who had become unconscious of his presence, drooping more heavily than usual. Not the Arundell sleep, nor, quite yet, the last sleep of this gentle-hearted Arundell.

CHAPTER XXVII

But when I entered the mansion that night it was not to the buoyant festivity planned for us by our loving host.

"Another sorrow upon us. My poor husband is stricken," said Madam Arundell, meeting us in the hall with her perfectly hard and hopeless face. She kissed her grandson, taking his thin hand. I felt his clutch on my arm, like a child making sure of its mother in a strange place.

Eleanor appeared from another quarter, and laid her face against Forrester's, and then his clutch loosened a little, as though it was not quite so strange.

Then she sprang to me and clung to me, sobbing. My efforts to maintain composure amid these scenes might have failed but for the timely appearance of Watson, displaying a joy and tenderness over Forrester that he could hardly keep within proper bounds.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Let me remove your top-coat, sir," he said by way of excuse, in a trembling voice, and now first Forrester ventured to let go of me wholly, and the old servant's hands were clasped in both his.

"God bless you! Watson. I'm so glad to see you! You're growing young, Watson! You're growing young!"

"God bless you, sir!" said Watson, devoid of long words on this occasion, the tears actually streaming down his face. "Thank you, sir! God bless you, sir! Take this large chair. Shall I get a hassock for your feet, sir? Your rooms are prepared, sir. How can I serve you, sir?"

"Watson!" said Madam Arundell, severely, "Mr. Arundell is not a child."

"Very near it, grandmother," said Forrester, still rather hoarsely, lifting his pleasant, worn face to her, and sinking back in the chair gratefully.

"Watson!" continued Madam Arundell, glancing back into the hall—"you are crushing Mr. Arundell's hat into the drawer instead of hanging it upon the rack!"

"That, mum, if you plase, mum," Watson ventured to affirm a trifle mirthfully, in

THE MORAL IMBECILES

his joyful eagerness, "is to make sure of his continuing at his home, mum, instead of ever running away and leaving us in despair, mum."

And Forrester's kind and merry glance dwelt full on him, his white teeth gleaming naturally.

"You are decidedly flustered, I think, Watson," observed madam, contemptuously.

Meanwhile Eleanor had drawn me to one side, and had my ear.

"I am engaged to Daniel!"

"What nonsense! Let me hear no more of this."

"And grandmamma consents. He has been very fortunate, you know."

"I did not know. Well—so that is it?"

"Your eyes look as though they were reading me, Martha. What do you see?"

"I see that we do not very well plan our lives—that they are simply and comprehensively guided for us."

"Of course, Martha—I always knew that."

"You have a wisdom, then, dear, that is better than wisdom," said I, with a sigh.
"Do you understand?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“And grandmamma invited Daniel to return with us and visit her. And he is coming very, very soon. And I shall be in your family now—that is the best of it. I shall be your sister, and you’ll have a responsibility of me—a great responsibility of me, dearest.”

“Eleanor,” said Madam Arundell, feeling rather left out in the cold, “are you telling Miss Scheffer of your engagement to her brother?”

“Yes, grandmmama.”

A look of pleasure and interest shone on Forrester’s face; then he turned full to his grandmother, his frank eyes never flinching, even without the support of my arm.

“I am engaged, too, grandmother. I am a happy man. I loved Martha from the very first. I had hard work getting her to think of me, grandmother. Those who know her wonder she could take up with me. I think if it had not been for that accident—that seemed such a hard thing—I might never have had this best thing. But I love her so dearly, I do not care—if it is pity.”

“Martha Scheffer engaged to *you*!” said

THE MORAL IMBECILES

his grandmother, with a cruel, almost unconscious accent of wonder.

Forrester faced her with direct eyes, but his lips trembled.

"I said it was from pity," said he, very gently.

"No—but I can never admit that!" I said, going over to him, and lifting the hair from his forehead, still pale and damp from weakness. "I love your grandson, Mrs. Arundell, and am ready to take up life's struggle with him anywhere."

"There shall be no struggle!" declared Madam Arundell, with a toss of her head. "I am rejoiced at the thought of having dear Miss Scheffer—Martha—in this relation. And certainly I congratulate you, with all justice, Forrester! Providence seems to have a peculiar predilection for those not always so endowed as they might be, perhaps, in regard to managing for themselves. Do you know that Beeman Price has offered her his hand?"

"I hope it was cleaner than it used to be," said Forrester, with a smart flush, setting his teeth.

"You have a very irritable boy to man-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

age, Martha, you see!" said madam, now very sweetly. "What do you think of this engagement, Eleanor?"

"I planned it—I mean, I've trusted and prayed for it for a long, long time," replied this moral imbecile, with a dignity most composed and gracious.

Madam flushed slightly, and shot a quick glance of surprise at her, as well as at the steady countenance of her other ethically incapable one—who, at least, had voluntarily offered his life to save that of another.

"What do you think, Martha?" said she. "I dare not draw a lesson from this irresponsibility, which seems to have had such charming results. Perhaps a safe thought is in 'The birds of the air, and the lilies of the field,'" she concluded, rapidly and piously, with vague consideration.

"*I* was rather a crow, grandmother," said Forrester, "but if you love people better than yourself—I mean Martha"—[his act of self-sacrifice never entered his memory]—"I think God gets a hand at you, and goes to whitewashing!"

Eleanor giggled rapturously.

"At least, let us not turn this incompre-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

hensible act of mercy and forbearance into mirth," said our hostess. "We will dine, and then I think it best that Martha, alone of you, should enter the room of my poor stricken husband."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THIS sentiment saturated the atmosphere again with a deep gloom.

But when I went in to see my host the cloud instantly lifted.

“John, this is Martha—my daughter Martha.”

A man, the counterpart of what my host might have been in health, rose from the bedside and met me with a smile.

“Why—kiss her! John.”

So in this fashion we very simply and naturally saluted each other.

“Martha,” said my host, holding my hand —“knew you’d come home, Martha, soon as you could. Very hard without you. Old ship reeled and bumped. Great times, now! happy times! Bring in Forrester—bring in my little girl.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Arundell, in a voice suggestive of the solicitude and kindness of the tomb—“you must not excite yourself.”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Nonsense, Laura ! I'm windin' up affairs. Goin' to do it, too ! Bring 'em in, Martha."

I felt my host's pulse ; it was the gentle tottering of the citadel to its fall. "I think it is best. It can do him no harm," I said. "Is it not so, Doctor Latimer ?"

The latter stood leaning beside a window, the sincerest expression of sympathy and sorrow on his face that I had ever seen there.

"Certainly it can do him no harm," he said.

So the two were brought in. The grandfather put a hand in that of each, and looked upward, much as Forrester had done on his sick-bed, gratefully and trustfully murmuring. But the guardian thought in his soul recalled him.

"Martha—perfectly sound mind—but I forget—forget. You and Forrester engaged—yes—long time—but married? eh?—I just forgot."

"No."

"Dearest," interrupted Mrs. Arundell, solemnly—who had discerned from my words and Doctor Latimer's that the end might come at any time, and had sent with ex-

THE MORAL IMBECILES

ceeding haste for her clergyman—"would you not like to see Doctor Bodwell? I heard the bell ring, and I think he is below."

"Certainly!" said our host, with unexpected animation; "Laura—always keen—always to the point. Great times, now! happy times! Good wife—dear wife."

But when the reverend gentleman entered we were astounded.

"Here you are, doctor! How d' do? Get a gait on—excuse me, dear old friend—he!—but the old ship's sinking, you know. Doctor!—Martha—Forrester. Stand there! We're gettin' home, you see. There! Yes, stand there! Marry them, doctor."

Doctor Bodwell regarded the group with a blankly questioning gaze.

"Witnesses enough!" said the dying general, with authority. "Come!"

Forrester and I stood beside the bed where he bade us. The clergyman married us.

"Where's — where's — where's Martha's brother?"

"He will come soon, grandpapa." Eleanor—the inspired—kissed him, in as natural and happy a manner as though no ghostly guest stood among us.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“ Well, little girl—little girl—Martha—oldest sister ’ll arrange your wedding. Leave it all with Martha. Good old north-country stock—Martha—Martha’s brother. Goin’ to have some brains in the family now! Money enough—handsome ’nough—gettin’ little reduced on brains—never mind. Leave it all with Martha.

“ John !

“ Now—the ‘ will’!—legally drawn—plenty to sign: sound mind, John. Forget now and then—but all right? All right, John ??”

“ It is all right, brother,” replied John Arundell, with his gentle, reassuring smile. “ Doctor Bodwell, will you read this document aloud? It will soothe, rather than disturb, my brother.”

The spiritual consoler read the worldly document, and he and Doctor Latimer affixed their names thereto.

My host sighed like a laborer getting towards contented rest.

“ And now, dearest,” said Mrs. Arundell, a desperately grave necessity burdening her close lips, “ will you not let Doctor Bodwell talk with you ??”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Why, yes, yes—like to talk with Doctor Bodwell—but rather used up."

"About your soul, Forrester?"

The old gentleman rallied his forces.

"Guess we think alike, Laura—Doctor and I—always have—talked a good deal with Doctor Bodwell—think alike."

"God our Father—Christians lookin' at other Christians and thinkin', 'Well, I know he's mine, but ain't so sure about you!' God our Father—children like their father, ain't they? law of nature—law of God. But go to actin' it—charity—love—Christian relations put you in a madhouse!"

Madam Arundell's face went shocked and white at these benighted ravings.

"God our Father: children like their father, ain't they? dare to say so—ought to say so—ought to act so. But Christians sayin', 'Don't look at me! Don't look one bit at me! look at God. Don't look at my actions—won't bear lookin' at; look only at God.' All wrong!"

Madam Arundell, so afflicted by these strange vagaries, yet stood silent with the rest.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Children like their father, ain't they?" said my host again, very pleasantly.

"Jesus Christ knew the way—I always loved Him; didn't say, 'Don't look at Me'! stood up and said, 'Yes, look! I'm like my Father—like our Father—you be like Him, too.' Didn't say, 'Don't look at Me'! Stood up and said, 'Behold! all ye weary—yes—like our Father! Trust Me! Come to Me!' I'm goin' to Him, too!"

There was such simplicity of resolve in this laboring pilgrim's voice that Madam Arundell recovered herself, conscientiously.

"Doctor Bodwell, will you not pray for him?"

"Madam," said the great divine, with a shaking voice, "I would rather need pray for myself. This child sees the way home, madam—never fear!"

"Always thought alike, Laura—Doctor and I. Lots of talks.

"Children like their father, ain't they?" he murmured presently, softly, and with unconscious repetition. "Always loved Him. Stumbled a long way—forgive—and He stood up and said, 'Yes, look!—like Him! Trust Me! Come to Me!' Goin' to Him, too!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“Martha! Where’s Martha?”

I went to his pillow, and, holding him, pressed my cheek to his: his hand, desperately clinging, sank in soft peace in mine.

“Stood up—‘Look!’” With that word my host’s laboring speech was changed to vision, even of the Compassionate, Himself! —and he went to Him.

CHAPTER XXIX

“ My last injunctions from my beloved master, mum, was to accilerate the joys of the youth of the family, mum. Shall I proceed to do so, mum ? ”

“ With caution, Watson ; as I called you particularly to say, I would rather you should incline to the commands of Mrs. Forrester Arundell, Junior. My precious Eleanor is so extravagant.”

“ Mrs. Forrester Arundell, Junior’s, commands for Miss Eleanor’s wedding far exceed Miss Eleanor’s own, mum. She aims to plase my beloved master and follow his wishes, mum ; a suprême elegance, yet very quiet, mum, befitting our mourning conditio-

“ I hope, Watson, that Mrs. Forrester Arundell, Junior, will not take on too indulgent a temperament.”

“ Ah, mum ! you address me as a servant long with you, mum. Permit me to reply

THE MORAL IMBECILES

in a similar strain, mum. If, by a little sympathy and indulgence, we can kape the lambs in the fold, mum.”

“Are you not growing rather sentimental, Watson?”

“Watson sentimental!” A cheerful voice, of the kindest modulation, arose from the other end of the hall, where John Arundell had just entered. “Pardon me, Laura—but Watson sentimental! Then he is a good man, as I always knew. All good men are sentimental.”

“Ah, but *you*—” said Madam Arundell, quitting her emotional servant, and drawing her brother, with quite a sprightly manner, into one of the great parlors—“how can you call *yourself* so, when you are continually deserting us for your wild travel—travel—travel?”

“Ah, but that only fills me with tenderer sentiment for the dear ones at home!”

“How can Augusta bear your long absences?”

“My Augusta is a saint, and she has endless compassion for my weak lung. Since that requires California and Italy, she even

THE MORAL IMBECILES

prescribes California and Italy. Oh, she is perfect!"

It had been one of the untiring efforts of Madam Arundell's long life to make John Arundell say that he did not like an atmosphere of leaflets, and that his town house was cold. But she had never accomplished this, and she never would. He smiled softly and unconsciously at her, and he was absolutely and eternally true.

"And are you drinking ginger-beer as usual?" said she, a little exasperated.

"No; but would to Heaven I had never taken anything stronger! I should not have such a crying woe in my right leg every now and then, I believe, Laura."

"You are very charitable, John."

"To whom, pray?"

"Oh, generally speaking."

"Well, I believe I am not 'near'—as 'Uncle Zeb' used to have it. No—no right-minded Arundell was ever 'near'!"

The batteries had recoiled on the attacking force itself.

"Great fortunes evaporate if not carefully manipulated, John."

"Let 'em!"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Ah, you remind me so at times of poor Forrester."

"Thank God for that!"

He was an inestimably true old man, this. When leaflets raged furiously and the wintry air grew chill, he embraced his wife with tearful tenderness and fled. Owning to no multiplicity of oral or printed lectures, to no frigidity of temperature; owning only, in his sweetness, to a left lung—which the angels in heaven alone, meanwhile, knew to be perfectly sound.

It is by no means a bitter reflection on an imaginary character, it is a fact concerning literal human nature, that Madam Arundell was accustomed to say, in tender comments on the departed, "It is well, however, to make one's assured peace with God."

"Grandmother," said I, at length, ever maintaining my character as undismayed snap-dragon of the family, "never was it made more assured. Look deeper in your own heart, dear, and see if yours is as child-like, according to the commandment, and as confident."

"So you think me self-righteous?" said she, not without a tinge of venom.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"Yes, dear grandmother, and so am I. And we must fight this, you and I."

She stared at me for an instant as an anomaly, though she should have been used to me by this time. Then that rare softening of tears came to her eyes.

For my Grandmother Arundell was a character that could tread on you very ruthlessly, gathering in the world, in the spirit of certain conquerors of old ; but if you seized lance and shield and faced her, she recognized an instant equality ; and if you were even fierce enough, she would twine her arms about your neck and quite adore you.

"Martha," said she, "I confess that often it all looks to me very dark and even uncertain. What shall we do then ?"

"In the first place, we must not threaten any creature of God with moral imbecility."

"But, Martha, we shall spoil people."

"But, grandmother, if Christ had pronounced the world morally imbecile, and left it with cold scorn, what then ? Was not His charity like the ocean ? Was not His love like the sea ? Not so much a trait of character as the element He swam in ?"

"But, Martha, we shall go too far."

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“We shall never go too far, grandmother—you and I. Would that we might! And we must humble ourselves, it is said, more like unto children.”

“*You* say that, my beloved Martha, and you are absolutely autocratic!”

“Oh, but, grandmother, that is a snare and a delusion. I have a heart good for nothing. It is soft as putty.”

“And you think mine hard?”

“Never any more, grandmother.”

Grandaunt Augusta, on the contrary, having distributed her latest essays on virtue and temperance among us, was accustomed to speak lovingly of “Dear John’s account of dear Forrester’s triumphant release.”

Madam Arundell had been wont to sigh. Now, said she, at last, more like a child repeating a text than with any conscious acceptance of it :

“Yes, Augusta, I think it was so! I am sure it was so.”

Yet I had her—I had her as a child pulling at my gown; and with whatever comprehension I had, other than hers, I taught her; and ever, with all tenderness and respect, I was master, as there was need I should be.

THE MORAL IMBECILES

And now Grandaunt Augusta, though ever steadfastly fighting the Evil One in large and copious efforts, congratulated herself with complacency on events in her own family.

"I always knew dear Eleanor would choose wisely," she remarked to me. "I have had deep anxieties about Forrester, but precious Eleanor's judgment has always been unerring."

I digested this in silence, and then remarked casually, "Are you not anxious about Forrester still?"

"Ah, my child!"—her large countenance beamed—"here are *you*, at last, fishing for a compliment!" But none could take offence at such a face. "No, Martha—no. I am not anxious about Forrester. Slight as the difference is in your years, I look at Forrester, my dear, as restored to the arms of a mother!"

I laughed outright; but Grandaunt Augusta had had her brief time at laughter, and now only smiled indulgently.

"But I never set him at good books, Aunt Augusta, and I never talk with him about his—moral condition."

"We labor according to our lights, my

THE MORAL IMBECILES

child," said she, with calm satisfaction. "And I have observed, Martha, that, under a crust of worldly severity and indifference, you are inclined none the less to be a spiritual nurse."

I gazed at her, biting my lips to conceal further mirth. She lifted her finger and shook her head at me.

"When will you be lecturing *me?*" she said.

I blushed. "Never!" I cried, with starting tears. "Why do you think so ill of me?"

"Martha, I struggle for light, but I am an old lady, rather indurate in old ways, perhaps. And, Martha, I have always, from babyhood, been cradled in luxury. You young eagles, thrown off the high ledges to sink or fly, is it strange if you had, at least, a broader outlook—"

I threw my arms about her neck. I was not naturally demonstrative, and few, if any, were ever demonstrative with her, in spite of her conventionally caressing manner. She kissed me with an eager naturalness, pale of face. "What we lack," she murmured, "God forgives. Do you not think so?"

THE MORAL IMBECILES

“All my hope for my own poor heart and life is based on that, Aunt Augusta.”

Tugging at my gown—my brave husband, for instance, stalwart and merry now, as ever, but an Arundell, inconsequent and childish.

Disliking “receptions,” and accompanying me with sublime sincerity of discountenance to those given in our honor, I remember how a most beautiful girl, who had known him of old, waylaid him amid the throng, with the brightest eyes, with smiles, with dimples, with captivating words and captivating laughter. The Arundells have a naïve trick of simply turning away from whatever dissatisfies or bores them. I was conversing with a physician of celebrity and deeply interested in his words, when I saw my large husband turn away from this siren and saunter over to me, and, finding me engaged, I was conscious that he had literally taken hold of a fold of my dress, and thus stood unconscious and unblushing.

“My dear Booby !” I turned aside to whisper to him, “go over and talk to that beautiful girl ! She is scandalized at your rudeness !”

THE MORAL IMBECILES

"I won't, Martha! You are *my* wife. I've a right to stand by you and show you off!"

Show *me* off!—but thus much cause have I ever had for jealousy!

But when we take our walks abroad together, then are we a scandal and a menace to all good principles of organized charity. Nothing of poverty, of misery, of deformity, can Forrester pass but it is our concern.

"No; but, anyway, the old woman's shawl *is* too thin, Martha; and look at her feet!—and old!

"But you can see *his* leg is off, Martha—no sham about that. And see his hands, all twisted and numb!"

"Oh, but, Martha—a *child* shivering like that!"

And I, though sapient in worldly philosophy, follow him blindly in evil doing; for we have great wealth, and though we should be kind to a miscreant now and then, I think that were better than to walk stonily and heedlessly along a path of such sorrowful seeming.

And if there is a hunchback or one lame

THE MORAL IMBECILES

or otherwise afflicted in our course, then my husband's own free stride almost goes lame itself and his tall head sinks. "It might so easily be us, Martha. It is just the same—it *is one of us.*" Such reverence for sorrow is in him. And I remember how he once threw his own strong life into the balance for humanity, and am not dismayed because his creed is a crudely simple one.

And the children!—Eleanor's and mine.

"The family name is certainly secure, mum," says Watson, nobly, and without sarcasm; "indubitably secure, mum, thank God! mum—safe against all contiguities, mum."

"It bates Irelan'," says Mary Ann—at least, I heard that she said so. "It bates the domestic increase in me own sad counthry, begor! Thank God they come but wan to a time!"

"We shall have some brains in the family now," my dear old host had chuckled, and though this prophecy may not have been signally justified in the event, yet they are very beautiful, they are very healthy, and, above all, they are tender—"tender-hearted, loving one another."

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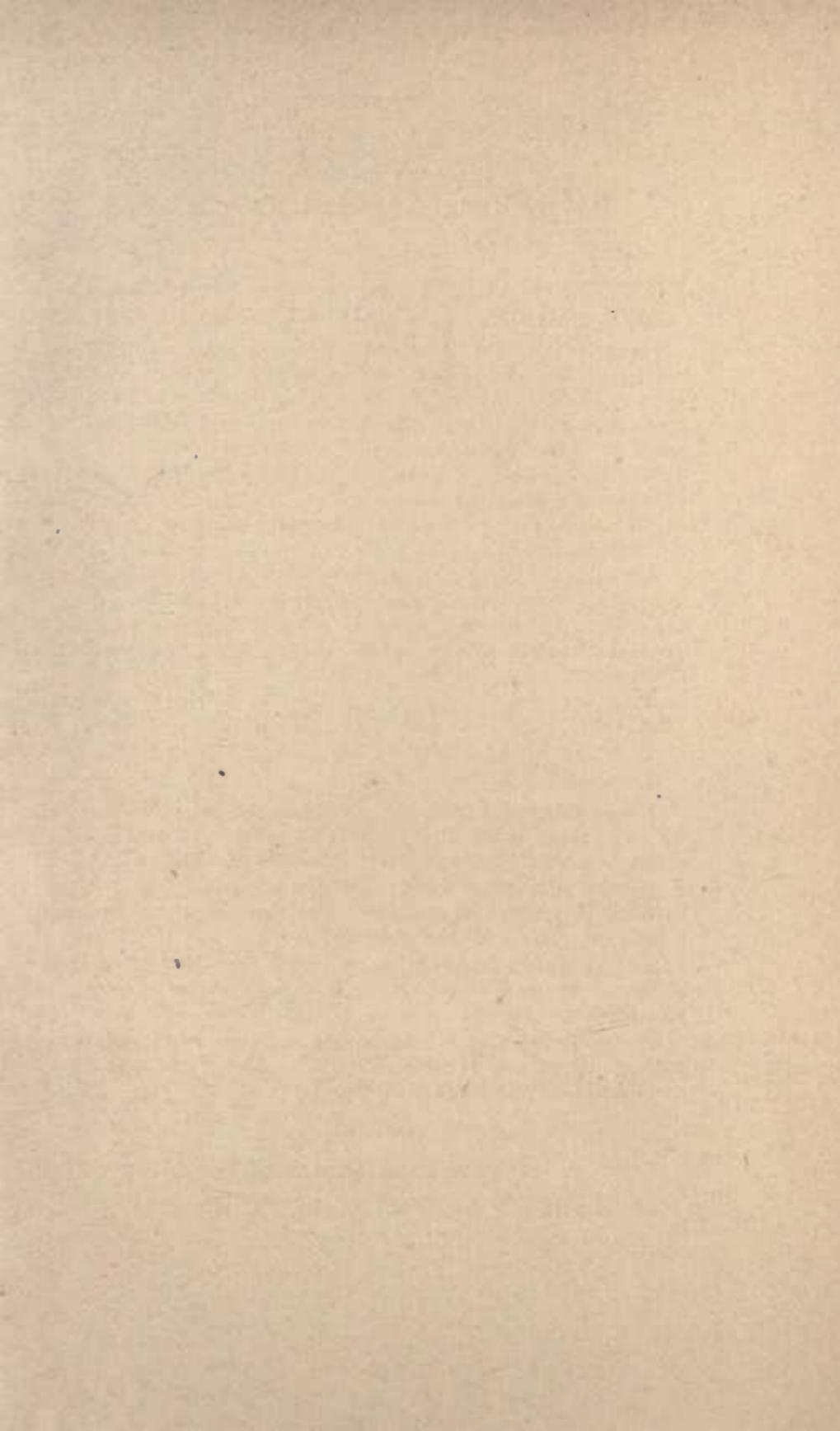
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